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THREE SHORT PLAYS



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TORONTO

THREE SHORT PLAYS

BY

MARY S. WATTS

AUTHOR OF "VAN CLEVE," "THE RISE OF JENNY CUSHING,"
"THE RUDDER," "NATHAN BURKE," ETC.

New York

THE MACMILLAN COMPANY

1917

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Set up and printed. Published January, 1917.

#125

JAN 11 1917

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no. 11

Jan 16 17.

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THREE SHORT PLAYS

AN ANCIENT DANCE

PLAY IN TWO ACTS

ACT I

CHARACTERS IN THE ORDER IN WHICH THEY APPEAR

A CARPENTER

WILLIAM JACKSON, *the Hitchcocks' butler*

MRS. JOHN HITCHCOCK

DR. JOHN HITCHCOCK, *a retired physician*

DICK HARDING

DOROTHY PIERCE

TOM WASHBURN

EDITH LECLERE [*Mrs. Franklin LeClere*]

FRANKLIN ["BUNNY"] LECLERE

TIME: the present, a summer evening.

SCENE: living-room of the Hitchcock residence at Bournemouth, Long Island.

[*Curtain rises, discovering the Hitchcock living-room.*

Back at c. a very wide doorway opening on a terrace, through this a glimpse of a garden in late afternoon light. Doors in side-walls R. U. and L. U. Mantel-piece in middle of wall R. Directly opposite in middle of wall L. wide and deep bay-window. Room handsomely decorated and furnished in English style, Jacobean period, modified and adapted to an Ameri-

can country-house; dark-panelled walls with built-in book-shelves, substantial stuffed chairs, heavy writing-table in bay-window and number of smaller tables, bright-colored chintz hangings and slip-covers. R. at right-angles to mantelpiece and facing audience a large davenport-lounge. R. D. at other side of mantel, nearer to audience an old-fashioned phonograph with "morning-glory" trumpet; in corner by it one of the common golden-oak cabinets for holding the cylindrical wax records which were used with that style of talking-machine. L. U. between door and bay-window a tall, four-fold screen of dark stamped and gilded leather; L. D. against wall at the side of bay-window nearer the audience a high carved and panelled black oak cabinet with doors, drawers, etc. Everything in some confusion, groups of chairs pushed together here and there as if to get them out of the way, rugs taken up and piled on the davenport; the glass doors belonging to opening at centre-back, taken off their hinges and leaned slanting against the wall at side of the opening; a clean pine plank lying on the floor in front of the fireplace with one end propped on the fender; a workman's coat and dingy soft hat hung on a chair-back; box of carpenter's tools on floor D. C. At rise of curtain a sound of hammering off-stage, which continues for several seconds.]

[Noise of hammering ceases. Enter CARPENTER through terrace-doors C. Comes down R. business of stooping down and measuring plank with foot-rule; straightens up, folding rule and sticking it in hip-pocket; considers plank, scratching his head. Finally lifts it and carries it outside to terrace. After a second, sound of sawing commences vigorously.]

[Enter hurriedly L. U. JACKSON in butler's livery-waistcoat and black trousers but with alpaca coat and straw hat, carrying package. Crosses to D. R. and in full view of audience unwraps a revolver and two boxes of shells; stands looking about for an instant, evidently at some loss where to put the things, at last lays them on mantel-shelf. During this, sound of sawing ceases and is followed immediately by sound of hammering. A pause of a second or two. JACKSON going R. U.]

CARPENTER. [Appears in opening c. Calls.] Say!

JACK. [Halts at door R. U. Turns.] What?

CARP. [Enters room.] Ask the lady to come here a minute, will you? So's she can see if it's fixed to suit her, you know.

JACK. Oh, are you through?

CARP. Uh-huh. [Comes D. c. Looks at watch in pocket of waistcoat hanging on back of chair.] It's six o'clock anyhow. I guess that's a day.

JACK. All right. [Exit R. U.]

[CARPENTER business of assembling his tools and placing them in tool-box, assumes coat and waistcoat, whistling softly to himself, puts on hat, lifts tool-box to shoulder.]

[Enter R. U. MRS. HITCHCOCK in evening-dress.]

MRS. H. Oh—ah—you're the carpenter? You wanted to see me?

CARP. Yes, ma'am. I'm done.

MRS. H. [Goes c.] Yes, Jackson said you were. [Steps outside of door, stands facing audience, steps backward, looking up.] Oh, that's very nice! That's just what I wanted! The lattice all around the doorway just that way — I *knew* it would be pretty! [Re-enters,

coming down c.] Tell your — ah — your boss — isn't that what you call him? — tell him Mrs. Hitchcock is very much pleased. I'm Mrs. Hitchcock, you know. Tell him I say that it's a very nice — ah — job.

CARP. Yes, ma'am. [*Going R. U.*] Was there anything else, ma'am?

MRS. H. No, that's all. Oh, the other door, please — that way — [*Points L. U.*] — Good-day — er — !

[*Exit CARPENTER L. U. As he goes out, voices heard indistinctly off R.* MRS. H. *at c. looks around room, makes a gesture at seeing its disorder, stoops and picks up a shaving. Enter noisily, talking R. U.* DR. HITCHCOCK, *followed by HARDING.*]

DR. H. Ah, Martha, are you there? Look who I've got hold of! [*Loud, jolly, slapping HARDING on the shoulder as he drags him forward.*] He didn't want to come but I made him!

MRS. H. Mr. Harding! Why, how nice! [*Advances to meet him, hand outstretched.*] I didn't even know that you were in this part of the globe!

HARD. [*Hat, cane, light overcoat all over one hand and arm, sets down suitcase with the other hand, smiling, apologetic.*] Mrs. Hitchcock! I'm afraid this isn't the most convenient of surprises —

[*Business of shaking hands.*]

MRS. H. Did the doctor say you actually didn't want to come here? How very ungallant!

HARD. Well, you see me? [*Displays himself humorously.*] I'm just this minute off the train —

DR. H. [*Interrupts.*] Ran into him at the hotel. "Good Lord, Dick Harding! I haven't seen you for a coon's age! Where did you drop from?" says I. "Timbuctoo!" says he —

MRS. H. [*Interrupts.*] *Timbuctoo?*

DR. H. Well, some place off the map — it's no matter where. He's just been round the world, you know — [*Interrupts himself.*] — and by the way, that being the case, why not offer him a chair? [*Bustles around.*] What's the matter with this room? — Oh yes, I remember! Never mind the muss, Richard, just sit down anywhere, and make yourself comfortable! [*To MRS. H.*] Where's Jackson? Ring for Jackson! [*To HARD.*] I'll have somebody take your things up, and get a room ready — herè, give me your bag! [*Seizes the suitcase.*]

HARD. [*Protesting.*] Really, Dr. Hitchcock — I — really —

DR. H. [*Shouting him down.*] Now, now, *now!* Don't say a word! Don't open your mouth! You're our guest, that's all there is to it! Jackson! [*Triumphantly gathers up HARDING's overcoat, hat, etc., and exit R. U. shouting.*] Jackson!

[*MRS. H., L. C. HARD. follows DR. H., R. U. a step or two, business of expostulating, returns, faces MRS. H. with gesture of comic defeat.*]

HARD. I'm saddled on you in spite of myself.

MRS. H. [*Warmly.*] Now, my dear boy, as if you *could* be unwelcome in our house! As if we hadn't known you since you were a baby and your father and mother before you! And when you've been away so long, too!

HARD. Oh no, just a year.

MRS. H. [*Apostrophizes the air.*] Just a year! He talks as if it were nothing! [*To HARD.*] When you get to my age, young gentleman, you'll realize that a year is — well, it's twelve irrecoverable months out

of one's life! Now you must sit down and tell me something about it. [*Looks around.*] Dear me, did you ever see such a dishevelled-looking place? We're going to have some amateur theatricals — you know what *that* means! If you'll just tumble those rugs off of the lounge — ?

[HARD. obeys. MRS. H. subsides on the lounge with a sigh.] Thanks! [*Looks up at him, smiling and patting the seat of the lounge beside her invitingly.*] Now! I'm sure you must be tired out, if you've only just got back.

HARD. [*Sits. Amused.*] From my round-the-world trip? Well, not exactly. I landed in dear old Hoboken a week ago.

MRS. H. It must be scorching hot in the city just now. Deliver me from New York in summer!

HARD. Oh yes, and nothing much doing, you know. I thought I'd run down here to Bournemouth for a few days — only I had no idea of trespassing on *you*. I fell in with Dr. Hitchcock the first thing at the hotel —

[*Enter DR. H. at R. U. cautiously carrying a tray with bottles of whiskey, seltzer, etc.*]

MRS. H. [*Interrupts HARD. amused.*] And he pounced on you at once, and took you prisoner! You're a perfect boon to him. A doctor who has been as busy as my husband all his life is *lost* when he retires from practice. We try to keep the house filled up with young people, and of course there is always more or less going on among the summer colony here, but still — [*Breaks off with a gesture.*]

DR. H. [*Loud voice from behind them at which they both jump.*] But still the truth is, my son, I'd be overjoyed to see an enemy, let alone a friend! Hey? Ha-ha!

[*Loud laugh. Comes down c. with tray. HARD. rises, laughing.*]

MRS. H. [*Shocked and reproachful.*] John! He'll think you're in earnest!

DR. H. [*Winks at HARD.*] My dear, I am! Hey, Dick? Ha-ha! [*Same business, laugh. Still looking at HARD. and laughing, business of beginning to set the tray down, evidently expecting to find a table immediately before him. Just as he is about to let go of it, an exclamation from HARD.*]

HARD. [*Movement.*] Look out, doctor! Er — pardon me — !

DR. H. [*Startled, looks down, stops himself just in time.*] Eh? What the mischief? Where's the table? Martha, what's become of the table? Confound Jackson, what's he done with — oh yes, I remember! Never mind, Dick, everything in the house is upside down — occasionally we even mislay our heads in the excitement. Just slide those things off of that chair — ? [*HARD. obeys.*]

MRS. H. [*Expostulating.*] John dear, you'll have everything in a worse confusion than ever. Why didn't you have Jackson bring that?

DR. H. Jackson's busy. [*Sets down tray on seat of chair which HARD. brings forward.*] There, help yourself, Richard! [*To MRS. H.*] He's setting the table or doing something or other for this dinner this evening.

[*HARD. business of mixing a high-ball.*]

MRS. H. Oh yes, to be sure! I told him it would be a little earlier than usual. [*To HARD. as he offers her a tumbler.*] No, thank you.

HARD. [*Glass in hand.*] A dinner? Now are you sure I won't throw your table out?

DR. H. [*Business of helping himself to the seltzer. Interrupts violently.*] Not in the least, I tell you! It's not a *dinner*, in fact, at all! It's merely something to eat! [*Moves about hunting for a chair.*] For these young people that are coming here to rehearse, you understand. [*Sits L. c.*] They aren't of the slightest importance! [*Drinks.*]

MRS. H. *John!* [*To HARD. with gesture of mock despair.*] You know his habit of saying the most awful things!

DR. H. [*Winks at HARD.*] Mean 'em, too! [*Glances teasingly at MRS. H. Chuckles. To HARD. in loud, jolly command.*] Sit down! You're going to *stay*, that's settled!

HARD. [*Amused. Sits on lounge. To MRS. H.*] You say you're going to have some amateur dramatics — ?

MRS. H. Yes. Some of the people who have summer-homes here like ourselves, the Washburns and Pierces, you know, and some of their guests — they all have house-parties, of course — are getting it up. The object is to raise funds for the Bournemouth Village Improvement Society —

DR. H. [*Interrupts.*] Not at all, Dick! The object is to ruin our lawn! They're going to give it here outside on our terrace to-morrow evening. [*Gesture towards terrace-doors.*] Audience sits on the grass unless it rains in which case they postpone dying of rheumatism and pneumonia until the next moonlight night.

MRS. H. Don't pay any attention to him, Mr. Harding, he's only too pleased to have them. [*Enthusiastic.*] It's really going to be charming! And hardly any expense at all — everybody giving their services, of course — and no scenery required. I just

had the carpenter put up a little lattice-work around the doors there — [*Gesture*] — I *know* you'll love it when you see them rehearse this evening! You dance so beautifully yourself.

HARD. [*Smiling. Deprecating.*] Well, I've been out of all that sort of thing for a year, you must remember. Every dance I used to know must be a back-number now. Is this entertainment to be all dancing?

MRS. H. No, not altogether. It's — er — [*Hesitates.*]

DR. H. [*Intervening.*] It's a hodge-podge — what-d'ye-call-'em? Variety-show?

HARD. Oh, vaudeville!

MRS. H. But this particular performance, the one they're rehearsing here is a — er — a sort of pantomime — a story acted out in the dancing, you know — ?

HARD. Oh yes, like those things the Russian Ballet do.

MRS. H. [*Hastily.*] Oh *no!* That is — well, I — [*Reluctantly.*] — I suppose it *is* a *little* like that — just a *little* — but nothing quite so — er — [*Pauses.*]

HARD. [*Polite, trying to help her out.*] I see. Not quite so — er — [*Pauses.*]

DR. H. [*Satiric gravity.*] Oh, of course, not quite so — er — [*Pauses.*]

MRS. H. [*Glances severely at DR. H.*] Not quite so *extreme*, naturally.

DR. H. [*Solemn.*] Certainly not. [*Suddenly taken with a fit of chuckling which ends in coughing and choking.*] Ho-ho! He-he-he — [*Coughs*] — Ungh! Errungh! [*To others as they make a movement of concern.*] Never mind — errungh! Swallowed wrong! Errungh — rungh — rungh!

[*Enter JACK. R. U. in butler's full-dress. He advances*

deferentially, trying to attract MRS. HITCHCOCK's attention.]

MRS. H. [*To HARD.*] The girls and men are all to be in Pierrot and Pierrette costumes, white with big black pom-poms — *so* pretty! They're going to put them on for the rehearsal to-night. [*Sees JACK.*] What is it?

JACK. If you please, madame — ?

[*MRS. H. rises and goes R. U. with him, stands at door, business of listening to him and giving directions.*]

[*During above DR. H. recovering from cough, winks at HARD. and beckons him over with an air of burlesque caution. Both at C.*]

DR. H. [*To HARD. slightly lowered voice.*] The fact is, Richard, this pantomime business has a — what you might call a *warm* plot! The eternal triangle — hey? You know — ? [*Prods HARD. in the ribs with a knowing glance.*] Hey? Understand me? Ha-ha-ha! [*Same business. Chuckles.*]

HARD. [*Retreats, rubbing his side.*] The triangle? [*Retreats again, speaking hastily with a wary eye on DR. H. as the latter makes a motion to prod him again.*] Oh yes, I understand. Same old thing, eh? Husband, wife, wife's lover?

DR. H. Just so! Finally the husband — [*Same business.*] — eh?

HARD. [*Same business.*] Finally the husband gets wise — ?

DR. H. Just so! Whereupon he very properly hunts up a pistol and kills the lady! Oh, it's quite dramatic, I assure you!

HARD. I daresay! But isn't it rather a queer selection for an entertainment such as this — ?

DR. H. [*Interrupts.*] Exactly what I thought and said! But they all stood me down that if you want to attract people nowadays, you've got to have what they call *pep*! *Pep*! It means high seasoning, you understand, Dick.

[MRS. H. *business of dismissing JACK. Comes down c.*]

HARD. [*Answering DR. H.*] Yes. I've — er — I've heard that phrase before —

DR. H. [*Sees MRS. H. advancing, interrupts HARD. in a loud, unnaturally casual manner.*] The name of it is "An Ancient Dance" — the title of the music they use. It's a piece by some old-time composer. [*To MRS. H.*] Who was it that wrote the music, my dear?

MRS. H. Bach, I think. [*Sits R. on lounge.*] Very likely the record is on the machine now, if you want to find out. [*Indicates phonograph.*] Unless Jackson put it back in the cabinet. [*To HARD.*] Jackson is our orchestra. He's become very expert at running the thing.

[HARD. *sits R. on lounge as before beside MRS. H.*]

DR. H. [*To HARD.*] They begin — [*Sings the air*] — Tee-de-lee-deedle-tee-tee! Tee-doodle-doodle-doo! [*Flourishes his arms in ballet fashion, taking steps on the points of his toes, holds out skirts of coat with finger-tips. Pauses, out of breath.*] Something like that, very light and gay. Then the other part comes — [*Stands still, holding his hands over an imaginary key-board, and moving fingers in imitation of a pianist*] — music rapid and soft, like this — [*Sings air*] — Teedle-leedle — teedle-leedle-teedle-leedle-leedle-leedle! And it's in the middle of that part that LeClere lets go with his shooting-iron — BANG! — and bowls her over.

[*During above the others have business of looking on in*

open amusement. They begin to applaud, but at mention of LeCLERE, HARD. breaks off abruptly. Changes position.]

MRS. H. [*Indulgent laughter, clapping hands gently.*] Bravo, John! You're as good as any of them! [*To HARD.*] Isn't he good, though?

HARD. [*Shifts position again. Speaks with perfunctory enthusiasm.*] Fine! Great! [*Pauses for a second.*] Er — did you say *LeClere*?

DR. H. [*Sits L. c. out of breath, a little tired, wipes forehead, fans himself with a newspaper, etc.*] Phew! It's hotter than I thought! Hey? *LeClere*? Yes, he takes the part of the jealous husband. You know him, don't you? It's the one they call "Bunny." Good-looking fellow without any sense.

MRS. H. [*Admonishing.*] John!

HARD. [*Rises and stands by mantel, resting elbow on it, face slightly averted.*] Oh yes, I know *Bunny LeClere*.

DR. H. [*To MRS. H.*] Can't help it, Martha, the poor fellow hasn't any sense. [*To HARD.*] If you know him, you'll agree that that's putting it *mildly*!

HARD. [*Same attitude.*] Oh, that's rather severe, isn't it, doctor? I — I always thought *Bunny* was a very good sort.

DR. H. Oh, I didn't mean that he wasn't all right everywhere except *here* — [*Taps his forehead.*] I must say — [*Wags head with a grimace.*]

HARD. [*At mantelpiece, palpable effort to speak naturally.*] I — I shouldn't wonder if I knew some of the others — ?

DR. H. Oh yes, all of 'em! There's *Tom Washburn* and the little *Pierce* girl and *Clifford Patton* —

MRS. H. [*Interrupts.*] But he can't get here this

evening. Jackson just told me Mr. Patton had telephoned over not to expect him — some business or something. [*To HARD.*] So there's his place at table all ready for you, and you needn't have any more scruples about — [*Halts a little abruptly, looks steadily at him.*]

HARD. [*Perfunctory.*] You are so kind. [*To DR. H.*] You were saying — ?

DR. H. [*Frowns.*] I was trying to think who the other one is — there's somebody else — Oh yes, of course! Mrs. LeClere — Mrs. "Bunny"! She plays the coquetish wife. You know her.

[*MRS. H. glances apprehensively at HARD. Rises and moves to the side of DR. H.'s chair, with assumption of carelessness.*]

HARD. [*Same manner and attitude.*] Why, yes — I — oh yes —

DR. H. She was Edith Richardson, you know. Married LeClere here about a year ago, wasn't it? [*Jerks head aside.*] What is it, Martha? What are you trying to fix? [*Feels all around his collar, annoyed.*]

MRS. H. [*Quickly.*] Your cravat's worked loose. [*Puts her hand on his shoulder and glances significantly towards HARD.*]

DR. H. [*Not noticing the dumb-show.*] Oh! [*Business of adjusting cravat. To HARD.*] I forget whether that LeClere wedding was just before or just after you went away — it was about that time anyhow — [*Testily, jerking away.*] Martha, my dear! You don't know how that tickles!

MRS. H. [*Shrugs helplessly. Moves away from him.*] Oh well! [*Glances at HARD. Hastily.*] Er — ah — isn't it lovely weather just now?

DR. H. [*To HARD.*] Mrs. LeClere is a beautiful dancer — beautiful — !

MRS. H. [*Interrupts desperately.*] Lovely weather! I hope it will be as nice as this to-morrow evening —

DR. H. [*Continues to HARD.*] Seems to me I remember now seeing you do some kind of fancy dancing with her, didn't you once?

HARD. [*At mantel, running his fingers mechanically along the shelf, face averted.*] Yes. I've danced with her.

[*Sky outside beginning to darken from this point on.*]

DR. H. Looking for matches, Dick? Want to smoke? [*Jumps up briskly, crossing R. as he speaks.*] There ought to be some there, right under your hand. The place is so upset, though — [*Business of feeling for matches.*] Ah, here's a box of 'em. [*Exclamation.*] Hello, Jackson's got the revolver! I told him to go down to the village and see if he could beg, borrow or steal one for us to use in the pantomime. [*Takes up revolver, handling it gingerly.*]

MRS. H. [*Nervously.*] Do be careful, John!

DR. H. My dear, I don't intend to experiment with it — I'm not one of these didn't know-it-was-loaded fools. [*To HARD.*] You know how to handle the things, without doubt?

HARD. [*Rouses himself with some effort.*] Eh? Oh — why — this way. [*Takes revolver and demonstrates.*] It's empty now. Here's where the shells go. Then you close it up so — see? And if you want to kill somebody — [*Forces a light tone.*] — you do like this. [*Shows action of trigger.*]

MRS. H. [*Starts and exclaims nervously as weapon clicks.*] Oh please! It might go off!

DR. H. Tst, tst, Martha, don't be foolish! There's nothing for it to go off *with* just now. [*Takes revolver from HARD. Adjusts eyeglass, examining it. Looks up and around. To MRS. H.*] Turn on the lights, if you please, my dear, I can't see a thing. [*To HARD.*] Jackson was to get some blank cartridges — shells — whatever you call 'em. See if there are any there, Dick, will you?

[*Enter JACK. R. U. with arms full of large pasteboard boxes. MRS. H. business of going about the room, turning on electric-lights in lamps, sconces, etc. Pressing button inside doors turns on porch-light illuminating terrace. At U. C. encounters JACK. Business of talking to him. Complete darkness outside. Room brightly lighted.*]

HARD. [*Searches mantelpiece. To DR. H.*] This seems to be the shells. Two boxes. [*Holds boxes one on top of the other, glancing at the top one as he hands it to DR. H.*] Blank Thirty-twos.

DR. H. [*Casual glance at boxes.*] Very good. The shells are one of our most necessary properties, you know. Got to have the noise — the report, that is — [*Replaces revolver and boxes on mantel as he speaks.*]

MRS. H. [*U. C. Calls.*] Hadn't you both better go and get dressed? Everybody will be here presently. They've just sent over the costumes. [*Indicates JACKSON'S boxes by a gesture, coming down C. as JACK. continues across up-stage with load, and exit L. U.*]

DR. H. [*Rebellious.*] Oh, dress! I don't want to dress, Martha! I won't dress! I'm perfectly clean —

MRS. H. [*Interrupts.*] Now, John — !

DR. H. [*Interrupts, stubborn, raising his voice.*] I am clean! Look at this waistcoat, Dick, isn't it clean?

HARD. [*Retreats, amused, embarrassed.*] Why, of

course, doctor, of course! But I believe I'll just go up — [*Going R. U.*]

MRS. H. Never mind him, Mr. Harding, we have this same fuss every evening. [*To DR. H.*] Come now, John!

[*Exit HARD. R. U.*]

DR. H. [*Grumbling and holding back as MRS. H. tows him up-stage.*] I tell you, Martha, it's all nonsense. Evening clothes for dinner!

[*Voices and laughter heard off L. distantly.*]

MRS. H. [*Leads DR. H. R. U. Imperative.*] S-sh! There they come!

DR. H. [*Same business.*] Let 'em come! Dress for a parcel of young jumping-jacks — !

MRS. H. Sh-h! [*Lowers voice, rapid, worried.*] You know, John, I just happened to remember something — I don't know what we're going to do about it —

DR. H. Hey?

MRS. H. [*Same manner.*] It's going to be frightfully awkward —

DR. H. [*Puzzled.*] Huh?

MRS. H. I tried my best to stop you talking about it a minute ago —

DR. H. [*Sarcastic calm.*] If you'll kindly tell me what we're talking about *now* — ?

MRS. H. Why, Edith Richardson — Edith LeClere, that is — and this young Mr. Harding — don't you remember the talk? He was desperately in love with her, and they say they were as good as engaged —

[*Halts abruptly as voices and laughter heard off L. much nearer. Both glance alertly in that direction.*]

MRS. H. [*Goes on more rapidly.*] And then all at once she threw him over and married this Franklin

LeClere. *That was why he — [Gesture towards the ceiling.] — went off, round the world —*

DR. H. [*Interrupts.*] Oh, that's all gossip!

MRS. H. [*Positive.*] No, John, it's *true!* You didn't notice how his face changed when you began to talk about her — I *couldn't* make you stop —

DR. H. [*Loud, uneasy, but obstinate.*] Oh, bosh! Anyhow, there's nothing *we* can do —

MRS. H. [*Interrupts.*] Sh-h!

[*Both going R. U. DR. H. talking, MRS. H. hushing him.*]

DR. H. Harding might as well face it first as last, —

MRS. H. Sh-h!

[*Exeunt R. U.*]

[*Enter L. U. JACK. Business of going about, picking up things and straightening room, putting chairs and tables where they belong, etc. He finds HARDING's tumbler on the mantelpiece, DR. HITCHCOCK's on the seat of a chair, places them on the tray; as he lifts it, and starts U. enter by terrace-doors EDITH LECLERE.*]

ED. [*Stands on threshold, looking about. Half-turns, looking off-stage L. Calls.*] Oh, they've taken the doors down! Everything's all ready! [*Turns towards room, sees JACK.*] Ah, Jackson! [*Comes down c.*]

JACK. [*Pauses, tray in hands. Respectful.*] Good-evening, Mrs. LeClere.

ED. [*Business of taking off light wrap, touching hair, dress, etc.*] Will you take this, please? [*Holds out wrap, but immediately withdraws it.*] Oh, your hands are full. Never mind.

JACK. [*Apologetic.*] In just a minute, if you please, madame — [*Going R. U.*]

ED. [*Throws wrap on chair.*] Oh, it's no matter,

JACKSON. [*Glances around.*] We must be early. Hasn't Mrs. Hitchcock come down yet?

JACK. [*At door R. U.*] Oh yes, madame! She's expecting you. [*Opens door.*]

ED. [*At table L. D. picks up newspaper, glancing over it; casually.*] Is Mr. Patton here?

JACK. [*Holding door open.*] No, madame. He telephoned he couldn't come.

ED. [*Drops paper, exclaims; dismayed.*] Can't come? Why, what's the matter?

JACK. [*Same business.*] I couldn't say, ma'am. He just telephoned he had important business and not to expect him. [*Waits a second, patient and respectful; then exit, closing door noiselessly.*]

[*At same moment, enter by terrace DOROTHY PIERCE and TOM WASHBURN.*]

WASH. [*Speaks from behind DOR. looking over her head.*] Hello, all set?

DOR. Isn't that lattice darling! [*On threshold, looking around.*] Why, where is everybody?

[*DOR. and WASH. come down c. Business of beginning to take off wraps.*]

ED. [*R. c.*] They'll come down directly, I suppose, but what do you think? Cliff Patton won't be here!

[*Exclamations. Others stop abruptly. WASH. with one arm in sleeve of overcoat, DOR. taking off scarf.*]

WASH. Hey?

DOR. He won't? Why?

ED. [*Shrugs.*] Don't know. Jackson says he simply telephoned he couldn't come.

[*A slight pause; all gaze blankly at one another.*]

DOR. [*Ejaculates.*] Christmas and New Year's! [*Drops*

into chair L. D. fists on arms of it.] Now what shall we do?
[Grimace.]

WASH. [L. Finishes taking off overcoat.] Why didn't Cliff telephone all of us while he was about it?

ED. [Shrugs.] Maybe he hadn't time. But we can't rehearse without him. And this is our last chance!

DOR. [To ED.] I'll tell you! Let your husband take Cliff's place. Couldn't he?

ED. [A little impatient.] Oh, Dolly! You know Mr. LeClere can't dance a step. And besides he couldn't very well act two parts at once. [Goes R. to lounge. Sits.]

WASH. [As she turns her back, to DOR. lowers his voice, grinning.] Well, I'll bet Bunny'd try! [They exchange a glance, business of controlling amusement.]

WASH. [Aloud.] We'll have to press Dr. Hitchcock into service — Oh! [Interrupts himself as DOR. makes a gesture. Turns up-stage.]

[Enter R. U. MRS. HITCHCOCK. All rise.]

MRS. H. Well, well, good-evening, all of you! [Comes down.] Apologies! Dr. Hitchcock will be down in a second. Is everyone here? [To ED.] I don't see Mr. LeClere.

ED. [Somewhat embarrassed.] Why, he stopped to put his costume on. He won't be long.

MRS. H. [Surprised.] His costume? But the costumes are here, my dear. I thought you were going to dress after dinner. [Looks around at the others who are in ordinary evening-dress, puzzled.]

ED. [Embarrassed.] All but Mr. LeClere. He — er — he thought it would — er — save time if he came already dressed.

[ED. and MRS. H. *business of talking together in front of fireplace.*]

DOR. [*To WASH. low voice.*] He's crazy over his costume, you know. He would have put it on for every rehearsal, if Edith had let him. Isn't that just like Bunny LeClere? [*Aloud, as ED. and MRS. H. turn in their direction.*] You've heard the sad news about Cliff Patton, I suppose, Mrs. Hitchcock?

MRS. H. [*Coming down c. pauses, startled.*] Mr. Patton? Why, no! What is it? Has anything happened to him? He's not sick? [*Looks from one to another alarmed.*]

[DOR. and WASH. *burst of laughter, unable to reply.* MRS. H. *turns to ED. bewildered.*]

ED. [*Smiles, reassuring manner.*] No indeed, Mrs. Hitchcock, don't be frightened. Nothing's happened. Dolly just means that he can't come to the rehearsal.

MRS. H. [*Relieved, half vexed.*] Oh, is *that* all? [*Shakes fan at DOR. in mock menace.*] Take care, miss, or I'll send you to bed without any supper! [*Sits L. c.*] Of course I knew that Mr. Patton wasn't coming. [*Placidly.*] You'll have to go over it without him.

[DOR. and WASH. *sit D. L. ED. R. C. General movement, and protesting ejaculation.*]

WASH. [*Shakes head.*] Well, I don't know —

DOR. Why, we *can't* — !

ED. [*To MRS. H. explanatory manner.*] You see, he's my partner, and we haven't had nearly enough practice as it is. Besides if he isn't here, it throws the dance all out, and everybody will get mixed up.

DOR. Suppose he doesn't come to-morrow night either, I'd like to know what he expects us to do!

ED. We'd have to give it up. You couldn't get anyone to take his place as late as this.

WASH. Well, don't let's borrow trouble. Cliff hasn't absconded yet.

MRS. H. [*Gesture.*] And besides I believe you can get a substitute — for tonight anyhow —

[*LECLERE's voice heard distantly off c. shouting the laughing refrain from Mephistopheles' serenade in Faust.*]

“Ha, ha, ha, ha!

Ah . . . ha . . . ha . . . ha . . . !”

[*Everybody jumps.*]

MRS. H. [*Interrupts herself, startled.*] Mercy on me, what's that?

[*General movement, everybody turning to look towards terrace.*]

ED. [*Rises hastily, annoyed, apologetic.*] Why — er — it's nothing — don't mind it — I mean I think it's just Mr. LeClere — don't mind him, Mrs. Hitchcock. He's — he's just singing, you know — [*Goes up c. and stands in terrace doorway, looking off.*]

MRS. H. [*Incredulous astonishment.*] Singing, my dear? Your husband? It sounded like some crazy person — [*Catches herself, and stops suddenly, biting her lips, confused.*] That is — of course I mean — ah —

ED. [*At terrace-door.*] Yes, I can see him coming through the shrubbery. [*Turns towards others.*] Mr. LeClere is so fond of that air from *Faust* — the “Serenade,” you know.

[*LECLERE's voice heard off, nearer.*]

“Ma l'amico favorito
Ma l'amico favorito
Ricever non val. . . .”

MRS. H. [*Feebly.*] Yes, of course! I recognize it now.

[DOR. *business of fit of giggles.* WASH. *business of trying to stop her and control his own laughter.*]

ED. [*Returns slowly down c. Indifferently.*] Franklin likes to sing — don't pay any attention to it, Mrs. Hitchcock. [*With interest.*] You were just starting to tell us about some possible substitute for Mr. Patton.

MRS. H. [*All at once embarrassed and cautious.*] Why, yes — I — I just recollected — [*Hesitates, begins again, a little too voluble and enthusiastic.*] It's the most fortunate thing — he only just turned up this afternoon — the doctor just *happened* to ask him to dinner — quite *unintentionally*, you know — well — er — I mean — ah — [*Flounders. Desperately, unnaturally casual manner.*] it's — it's a Mr. Harding.

[ED. *halts, half-way down from terrace-doors, at R. c. Stands facing audience, perfectly still for a second, then takes up long chain about her neck and runs it through her fingers, examining the links.*]

WASH. [*Surprised.*] Not Dick Harding? You don't say so?

[DOR. *silent, alertly watches* ED. MRS. H. *palpably nervous.*]

ED. [*Same business. Composed voice and manner.*] Mr. Harding? Oh yes! He's been away, hasn't he?

[*A slight pause.*]

[*Enter* LECLERE, U. c. *in Pierrot costume. Strikes melodramatic attitude. Nobody sees him.*]

LECL. [*Sings.*]

“Ha, ha, ha, ha!

Ah . . . ha . . . ha . . . ha . . . !”

[*Everybody jumps and turns to look.*]

[Enter R. U. violently DR. HITCHCOCK. Everybody turns towards him. General movement. DOR. and WASH. rise.]

DR. H. [*Business of greeting them curtly.*] Oh, good-evening, all of you! [*To MRS. H. coming down, loud and angry.*] Martha, did you hear some fool bawling around our grounds just now? [*Mimics.*] Yah . . . Yah . . . Yah . . . !—like that? Right under our very windows—it's an outrage! [*Storms around in a rage, getting louder and louder.*] I'll complain to the authorities! We aren't allowed a minute of privacy — !

MRS. H. [*Business of repeated vain attempts to stop him.*] Sh-h, John, please — !

DR. H. [*Louder, not heeding.*] I'm a tax-payer and I propose to have my rights! Of all the abominable racket — !

MRS. H. [*Same business.*] But do listen — !

DR. H. [*Calms down a little, but still impatient.*] Oh, I know what you're going to say, Martha. You're always so afraid of making trouble for somebody. Well, I'm not! [*Starts across to door L. U.*] I'm going to telephone at once. We don't have to be overrun with maniacs and idiots — [*Encounters LECL. Halts, startled, not recognizing him.*] Who's this? [*Feels for and tries to adjust eyeglasses.*]

LECL. [*Shout of laughter.*] Ha, ha, ha — ho-ho! Caught you that time, doctor! You didn't know who you were talking about! [*Claps DR. H. on back.*] Ha, ha, ha, that's a joke!

DR. H. [*Staggers under blow, dropping eyeglasses to the end of their ribbon.*] What the devil? [*Recovers. Gets eyeglasses in place.*] Oh! It's you!

LECL. [*Unaffected amusement.*] Sure! Why, that was *me* singing that you heard! I'm the fool you were going on about just now! [*Claps him on back. To others, breaking into laughter between words.*] He called me a fool — ha, ha, ha — he-he-he-ha! — right before my face, mind you — ha, ha, ho! — [*Wags head, wiping tears of enjoyment from his eyes.*] That's a pretty good one on you, doctor!

DR. H. [*Same business, drops eyeglasses, recovers and readjusts them.*] Very sorry, LeClere! I entreat you to believe I wouldn't ordinarily call you a fool — [*Pauses, deliberately removes glasses, wipes them, readjusts them.*] — before your face.

[*DOR. and WASH. business of stifling laughter. MRS. H. anxious look. ED. with air of complete indifference, moves down R. sits on lounge.*]

LECL. [*Warmly.*] Oh, that's all right, doctor! I knew you weren't dreaming it was *I* —

DR. H. [*Grunts.*] Ungh!

LECL. Fact is, I suppose I hadn't any business singing —

DR. H. [*Emphatic.*] Certainly *not*!

LECL. In the night air that way, I know it's bad for the throat —

DR. H. And for the *ears*, too!

LECL. [*Surprised.*] *Is* it? I never heard that before! But the way of it was this: this was the way it was, you know. I was coming along in the moonlight — no, it must have been the electric light — the moon's not bright enough yet — it must have been that very strong electric light on the post right by the entrance to your grounds — you know where that is — ? [*Pauses an instant expectantly.*]

[During above, DR. H. and MRS. H. standing nearest LECL. at C. with expression of bored politeness. DOR. and WASH. L. D. business of murmuring together, openly paying no attention to LECL. ED. on lounge R. looking away absently, makes no pretense of listening.]

[Enter JACK. R. U. with tray of cocktails and sandwiches.]

DR. H. [Answers LECL. at random.] Eh? Oh yes — quite so — [Turns to MRS. H., draws her aside a little, business of exchanging questions and remarks.]

LECL. Well, as I was saying, I was just coming along, not thinking of anything in particular — [Pauses, seeing JACK. advancing with tray.]

DR. H. [Same business. Absent-minded warmth.] No, indeed, of course not! [Business of continuing conversation with MRS. H.]

LECL. [Takes cocktail from tray which JACK. offers him.] When all at once I saw my shadow — [Stops to select a sandwich.]

[All same business. JACK. business of moving from one to another offering tray. LECL. goes on talking, glass in hand, sandwich in the other, business of an occasional drink or bite.]

LECL. It made me jump, by Jove! In this costume, with this tall feather sticking up at the back of the cap — [Bites, speaks with mouth full] — it looked like the devil in the opera, you know — [Swallows mouthful. Drinks.] — so that's what started me singing. Funny, wasn't it? Here y'are, Jackson! [Gesture with empty glass.] Corking good Manhattan! [Sets glass on tray.]

JACK. [Respectful acknowledgment.] Yes, sir. [Goes R. U.]

LECL. [Finishing sandwich. Looks around.] Hello, what's the matter with everybody? You're as quiet

as so many oysters — [*Interrupts himself with gesture.*] — Oh, say, that reminds me of a conundrum I once heard —

DR. H. [*Interrupts.*] Just a minute, please! [*Calls after JACK.*] Don't take those away yet, Jackson! Leave them here until Mr. Harding comes down, he'll want one. [*Goes U. a few steps.*]

[*JACK. already at door R. U. stops, returns, arranges tray on small table R. near end of lounge. Exit R. U.*]

LECL. [*Continues to MRS. H. standing near by, but obviously not listening to him. Others same business as before.*] At least, it wasn't a conundrum exactly, but one of those things they catch you with. It went like this: What sort of a noise annoys an oyster?

DR. H. [*Returning to MRS. H.*] If Harding's willing to take Cliff's part at short notice — [*Breaks off as she makes a gesture, calling his attention to LECL. To LECL. vaguely.*] Ah — er — you were saying — ?

LECL. What sort of a noise annoys an oyster?

DR. H. [*Astounded.*] Hey?

LECL. It's a *catch* — one of these *catches*, you know — only I can't remember what comes next. But that's rather cute, don't you think, just by itself? A noise annoys an oyster! Such a lot of funny sounds! A noise annoys —

DR. H. [*Interrupts hastily.*] Have a cigarette? [*Offers box. LECL. takes one.*] Won't you? [*To WASH.*]

[*Business of men lighting cigarettes. DOR., WASH. and LECL. business of talking together. DR. H. offers MRS. H. a cigarette with burlesque gallantry. She rejects it indignantly; crosses R.; sits on lounge, business of talking with ED. DR. H. lights cigarette, looks at watch. All this business should not occupy more than a minute.*]

DR. H. [*As he replaces watch, glancing towards door* R. U.] Well, I make no bones of announcing that I'm hungry. [*Addresses the company generally.*] Shall we wait for Richard?

MRS. H. [*Remonstratingly.*] Oh, I think we'd better, John.

LECL. [*Turns away from DOR. and WASH. Heartily.*] Wait for him? Why, of course, let's wait! I didn't know old Dick was anywhere near home until they told me just now. [*Jerks head towards DOR. and WASH. Calls across to ED.*] Dick Harding's here, Edith. Isn't that bully?

ED. [*Composed.*] Yes, indeed!

LECL. They've just been saying they're going to get him to be your partner instead of Cliff. I call that great luck! Dick can make rings around Cliff Patton dancing —

DOR. [*Interrupts.*] But we don't know yet whether Mr. Harding will do it.

LECL. [*Chuckles.*] We should worry about *that*! Why, Harding used to dance with Edith all the time! [*With pride.*] She's such a bully dancer, you know. Why, lots of people have said to me that Pavlova couldn't *touch* her —

ED. [*Interrupts, embarrassed, annoyed, trying to pass it over with a laugh.*] Really, Franklin — !

LECL. They have, too, Edith, you *know* they have! And they wouldn't have any object in saying such a thing to me unless they *meant* it! I didn't *ask* 'em to say it! They came and told me of their own accord. [*To others, with pride.*] And besides Pavlova isn't *in* it with Edith when it comes to *looks* — isn't that so? Oh, of course, you've all seen more of Pavlova — I

mean you've seen more of her dancing — oh, pshaw, I don't mean that either —

[*Everybody laughing, DR. H. outright, MRS. H. decorously amused, WASH. uproariously, DOR. giggling, ED. half amused, half irritated.*]

LECL. [*Perfectly good-natured.*] You all know what I mean — I mean you've seen Pavlova oftener — Well, go ahead and laugh all you want to! I know it sounded funny. Everybody always laughs at me anyhow — I don't care! It's *so*, anyhow. About Edith's dancing, I mean. You'll see Dicky Harding will jump at the chance to dance with her. Only — [*Shakes head, frowning suddenly.*] — I don't believe he'll care much about this music. I wonder if we couldn't get something in place of that bum old phonograph. If Harding doesn't say it's the worst ever — Hey? Oh — er — [*Halts abruptly as WASH. gives him a savage nudge. Flounders.*] Well — that is —

[*Others out of countenance, glancing at DR. H. DOR. and WASH. both try to speak at once.*]

DOR. [*Loud and awkwardly.*] Why — er — ahem-hem! [*Coughs unnaturally.*]

WASH. [*Same business.*] Oh — er — ahem-hem!

DR. H. [*A little stiff.*] I think the music, such as it is, is quite adequate to the performance, LeClere — to your part of it, at any rate.

LECL. [*Conscious of having blundered, regretful, anxious to make amends.*] Oh yes! Oh, the music's all right for *me*, doctor! I don't do any dancing. Any old music would do for me, no matter how punk it was! I just thought Harding would want something *good* — that is — er — [*Flounders.*] — of course this music's first-rate, only — maybe Harding might be more used

to one of these modern machines, you know — the up-to-date ones.

DR. H. Indeed?

LECL. [*Regaining confidence.*] Oh, there isn't any comparison! Of course that old kind with the horn was fine in its time — [*Interrupts himself hastily.*] — and this one's all right still, of course, plenty good enough for what you want, but — [*Enthusiastic.*] — you ought to hear the new ones! Ever seen one? They've got disks, you know, instead of those ridiculous old wax cylinders — *disks* — like this, you know — [*Illustrates with his hands.*]

WASH. [*Interrupts imperatively.*] Oh, hire a hall, Bunny! We know all about 'em. [*To DOR. briskly.*] While we're waiting, let's put on the "Ancient Dance" record, and practice a little. Come on! [*Crosses R. D. To others.*] You don't mind?

DR. H. [*Ironical politeness.*] If Mr. LeClere can stand it — ! [*Goes U. pausing by lounge. Business of talking to MRS. H. and ED.*]

LECL. [*Stands L. D.*] *Me* stand it? Why, I — [*Stops, puzzled and troubled.*]

[*DOR. joins WASH. by phonograph R. D. Business for both of them of winding up machine, and trying to prepare it.*]

DOR. [*Low voice.*] I don't see how we can practice anything, just we two —

WASH. [*Interrupts, low voice.*] We can't. I just wanted to cover up that break of Bunny's, or get by it, somehow. It was just *like* him. [*Aloud, tinkering with machine.*] Look here, there's a record on already, and I can't get it off. What d'ye do, doctor, do you know? [*Same business.*]

DOR. [*Anxious.*] Well, don't fuss with it anyhow, you might break something.

DR. H. [*Turns. Comes down.*] I'm not much of a mechanic. [*Bends over machine, adjusting eyeglasses, and examining it gingerly.*]

MRS. H. Better have Jackson, John dear. [*To EDITH.*] Will you ring?

[*ED. rises, moves to side of mantel, stands with finger on push-button.*]

LECL. [*Jumps up eagerly.*] I'll get him, Mrs. Hitchcock. Where is he?

ED. [*Cool voice.*] Never mind, Franklin. [*Makes a slight imperative gesture, and he sits down again obediently.*]

DR. H. [*At phonograph. Same business.*] It seems to be locked — [*Interrupts himself suddenly, straightens up.*] — Oh, I remember now! We were going to try an experiment. I had Jackson put on a blank cylinder, so that we could talk into the thing and get a record of our own voices.

DOR. [*Interrupts; enthusiastic.*] Oh, doctor, how perfectly grand!

WASH. [*Almost at the same time.*] Say, that would be fun!

LECL. [*Crosses R. D. With interest, gazing at phonograph.*] Can you do that?

[*Enter JACK. R. U. Comes down c. Business of MRS. H. speaking to him.*]

DR. H. [*To LECL. pointedly but good-naturedly.*] Not with the disk kind, I think! [*Sees JACK.*] Oh, come here! [*To others, motioning them to stand aside.*] Let him attend to it.

[*All R. D. grouped near phonograph. JACK. business of looking it all over.*]

LECL. [*Stands at JACK's side, obviously very much in the way.*] What d'ye do to it, anyhow?

JACK. [*Patient, respectful.*] I don't know that I could explain it to *you*, sir. They showed me how at the phonograph-place.

WASH. It works like some of these dictagraphs they have nowadays, I expect.

JACK. I couldn't say, sir. You sort of throw it out of gear and then you sort of reverse the action — [*Interrupts himself, interposing his hand quickly between LECL. and the machine.*] — If you please, sir — !

WASH. [*Sharply.*] Look out, Bunny, you're right in his way!

LECL. Oh! [*Retreats.*]

JACK. [*Respectfully, to LECL.*] It's all right, sir, if you want to look — only you see there's this here little key thing at the side here — [*Shows him.*] — that sets it going. It moves so easy — just with the least little touch, and if you was to turn it on while nobody was talking into it, why, you'd waste that much space on the record, you know, sir.

DR. H. [*Addresses the company.*] Well now, what is it you want? The blank record taken off, and the other one put on?

DOR. [*Excited.*] Oh no! [*To others.*] Let's leave it on, and everybody talk into it! [*To DR. H. coaxingly.*] Do let's, doctor! Come on, Edith, don't you want to? [*To MRS. H.*] You'll have to, too, you know! [*To WASH.*] Aren't you crazy to hear your own voice? I think that will be the *weirdest* thing — ! [*To JACK.*] Could we have a regular conversation; all of us talking at once?

DR. H. [*Raises hand, checking her good-humoredly.*]

Wait! Wait just one second! [To JACK.] Is it ready?

JACK. Yes, sir.

DR. H. [*Lower voice. Others business of talking together.*] I suppose one record will hold all the voices? Of course it depends on how long each one talks — ?

JACK. [*Respectful, innocent, serious.*] Three ladies, sir? [*Dubious, shaking head.*] I don't know, sir —

DR. H. Well — er — [*Laughs, tries to turn it into a cough.*] — Ho-ha — errungh! Ha-ha — ahem! [*Turns to company.*] Well? All ready?

[*A pause, everybody looking at everybody else.*]

DR. H. [*Looks around.*] No candidates?

[*Same business.*]

DR. H. [*To DOR.*] What's become of all your enthusiasm?

DOR. [*Hangs back.*] Oh, somebody else go first! Mrs. Hitchcock, you go!

MRS. H. [*Decidedly.*] No, indeed! Edith — ?

ED. [*Amused.*] Wait till I've thought up something brilliant.

LECL. You don't have to talk, do you? [*To JACK.*] Can't I sing? [*Moves forward.*]

JACK. [*Innocent.*] I don't know, sir. I don't think it makes much difference what kind of a sound you make.

[DR. H., MRS. H., DOR., WASH. *business of choking down laughter.* JACK. *innocent, respectful, silent.*]

ED. [*Stops LECL. as he advances to phonograph. Low voice, forced patience.*] I think perhaps you'd better not, Franklin. You know you might take more than your share of the space on the record —

LECL. [*Interrupts, earnestly.*] No, I won't, Edith. I'd only sing one verse —

ED. [*Interrupts, same manner.*] I'm afraid you'd forget and go on too long — [*They go u. business of talking.*]

[*A very slight pause, everybody watching ED. and LECCL. for a second.*]

WASH. [*Abruptly.*] Here, I'll say something into it, just to start the rest of you. [*Steps in front of horn, cigarette in one hand. Stands about a yard from the instrument.*] Is this near enough, Jackson?

JACK. Yes, sir, just about. [*Hand on machine.*] Will you say when you're going to begin, sir?

WASH. All right. Let her go!

[*JACK. business of setting machine going. It starts with barely audible click, and makes a faint grinding noise.*]

WASH. [*Shouts.*] Hello, there! [*Pauses. Smokes. Considers.*] Yours truly, Thomas R. Washburn! [*Steps back and aside. Natural voice.*] That's all, Jackson. [*Glances around.*] Next!

[*JACK. business of stopping machine.*]

[*DOR. advances hesitatingly.*]

DR. H. [*Amused.*] *All?* Why, isn't that rather — rather condensed? You might have added a few remarks about the political situation or the stock-market.

WASH. [*Grins.*] Not any remarks fit to listen to! [*To JACK.*] Do you think that recorded all right?

JACK. Oh yes, sir. You didn't need to have spoke so loud.

DOR. [*In front of horn.*] Oh, *don't* you? About *how* loud ought I — ?

JACK. Just your natural voice, please, miss. Shall I start it now?

DOR. [*Desperately.*] Yes, go ahead!

[*JACK. same business as before.*]

DOR. Oh, gracious, I haven't an idea what to say! . . .
[*Pause.*] . . . Why, it's perfectly stupefying! . . .
[*Pause.*] . . . Like when people stay too long calling
and everybody runs out . . . [*Pause.*] . . . Runs out
of talk, I mean, of course. . . . [*Pause.*] . . . This is
going to sound simply idiotic . . . [*Pause.*] . . . How
much of the thing have I used up, Jackson? An inch? —
[*Interrupts herself.*] — Oh, mercy, I didn't mean for
that to get taken down! Can't you stop it? [*Interrupts
herself with exclamation.*] Oh, Mr. Harding!

[*Enter HARDING R. U. General movement. JACK.
business of stopping phonograph and examining it.
HARD. comes down. Business of greetings, everyone
speaking almost at the same time. ED. stands L. U.
MRS. H. at L. D. Others grouped C. and R.*]

WASH. Hello, Dick!

LECL. Welcome to our city!

[*DR. H. business of giving an order to JACK. then crosses
L. D. business of exchanging some confidential remarks
with MRS. H.*]

HARD. [*At same time as others.*] Hello, Wash., old
fellow! Miss Pierce! Bunny, how are you? [*Shakes
hands all around.*]

LECL. [*Eagerly.*] Edith's here, too! My wife's here
too, did you know? [*Raises voice.*] Edith!

HARD. [*Composed.*] Why, yes, of course, I hoped to
see her — [*Turns.*] — Mrs. LeClere!

ED. [*Comes down; smooth and conventional manner.*]
Mr. Harding, so glad you're back!

HARD. [*Conventional.*] Thanks, it's very nice of you
to say so.

[*They shake hands.*]

LECL. [*Warmly.*] Oh, but she *means* it, don't you,

Edith? Everybody's missed you like — like thunder! And oh, I say, it's the luckiest thing your being here right now! [*To others.*] Isn't it? [*To HARD.*] On account of this dance, you know.

HARD. [*Puzzled.*] Eh? [*Takes cocktail from tray which JACK. offers.*]

LECL. Yes, it's all arranged. You're to take Patton's place.

HARD. [*Blankly.*] Patton's place? [*Eyes LECL. over, noticing his costume. Shakes head, turns to WASH.*] What's the answer, Tom? [*Drinks cocktail and sets glass back on waiter.*]

[*Exit JACK. L. U.*]

LECL. [*To HARD.*] I *told* you! You're just in time to fill in. You're always so good at filling in.

WASH. [*To HARD.*] If I'd been in Bunny's place, I wouldn't have sprung this on you till after dinner.

[*LECL., WASH. and HARD. talking together. ED. and DOR. aside L. business of talking together.*]

DR. H. [*To MRS. H. low voice.*] Fill in? Isn't he tactful? [*Loud, turning towards others.*] After dinner, did you say, Thomas? That's a good suggestion. It seems to me we've waited long enough *before* dinner! [*Looks at watch, going U.*]

LECL. [*To HARD. apparently finishing explanation.*] But if you'll dance with Edith, we can go right on with the rehearsal, you see.

HARD. [*Slight start.*] Dance with — ? [*Turns. Looks at ED.*]

ED. [*Composed.*] Yes, isn't it an appalling prospect?

HARD. [*Momentarily at a loss.*] Why — I — I — [*Stammers.*] — I really *can't* — I — [*Visibly upset.*]

ED. [*Conventional mock sympathy.*] Dreadful, isn't it?

LECL. [*To HARD. warmly.*] Pshaw, you can do it easy! You're great at any kind of dancing. And don't you pay any attention to Edith. She's all the time talking that way — saying things she doesn't really mean.

HARD. [*Recovering a little. Smoothly, looking at ED.*] Yes, I know that!

LECL. She's just in fun, you know. Why, she knows how well you can dance, and you know how *she* dances, and you both know that the other one knows that you each *know* —

WASH. [*Grinning.*] Look out, Bunny, you're going back in the same hole you came out of!

[*Movement and laughter. HARD. recovering poise.*]

LECL. [*Good-natured.*] All right, all of you laugh all you want to. You know I'm in earnest, only I'm not very good at saying things. [*To ED.*] You ask him — he'll do it if *you* ask him to!

ED. [*Pleasant, civil, reasonable.*] But if Mr. Harding doesn't really want to —

[*A slight pause, everybody looking at HARD.*]

HARD. [*Looks at ED. uncertainly.*] I — I — I'm afraid — that is, I don't believe — [*Flounders.*]

DOR. [*Mischievous.*] You want to be coaxed, Mr. Harding. [*To others.*] *That's* what ails him!

HARD. [*Recovering.*] Oh, come now, Miss Pierce!

DR. H. [*Interrupts, loud voice.*] Well, settle it among yourselves, I'm going to dinner — [*Goes R. U.*]

MRS. H. [*Pursues him, expostulating.*] Now, John — ! [*Business of detaining him at door R. U.*]

WASH. [*To HARD.*] You might accommodate us, just for to-night anyhow.

HARD. [*Once more at ease.*] Why, of course! De-

lighted to! The only thing is I don't like to bore Mrs. LeClere — [*To ED.*] — I don't know a single step or figure that you're going to do!

[*Enter JACK. R. U. Throws door open wide, bows silently to MRS. H.*]

LECL. [*To HARD.*] Oh, they're easy — at least they look easy when she does 'em. [*To ED.*] Show him that one just before the end — when I shoot you, you know — you said that was the only hard place.

ED. [*Hesitates, showing embarrassment and reluctance for the first time.*] Why, I — we haven't any music —

LECL. That's all right, I'll whistle it. [*Begins whistling air of dance.*]

[*ED. takes position at c. HARD. moves opposite to her. Others fall back.*]

ED. [*To HARD.*] You have to take my hand — [*Extends hand; HARD. hesitates an instant, then takes it.*]

ED. [*Continuing.*] And the step is like this. [*Demonstrates; HARD. watches and imitates her.*]

WASH. Look out! Jackson's flagging us. [*Goes U.*]

LECL. [*Breaks off whistle.*] That's it, old chap! Fine! Told you you'd get it right off! [*Watches them a second longer, then goes U.*]

ED. [*Halts in middle of figure. To HARD.*] No, now your other hand, please. We must turn here. This way. [*Demonstrates.*]

HARD. Oh, I see! [*Same business.*]

MRS. H. [*At door R. U. Indulgent patience.*] Well, young people — ?

HARD. [*Over his shoulder, absorbed in dance.*] All right, in a minute!

[*DR. H. raises hands to Heaven in burlesque tragedy. Exit R. U.*]

DOR. [*Runs R. U. Seizes MRS. H. around the waist.*] Mrs. Hitchcock, you're an angel of patience!

WASH. [*Follows.*] You bet! Nobody else would stand for us!

MRS. H. [*Smiling.*] My mind's at ease. The soup is iced!

[*Exeunt R. U. MRS. H., DOR., WASH. and LECL. talking and laughing.*]

[ED. and HARD. *business of continuing dance for a few moments.*]

ED. [*Stops.*] Now here is the hard part. We have to be careful or we'll bungle it. It's where I'm killed, you know — [*Looks around*] — I ought to have more room to fall — [*Moves down c.*]

[HARD. *follows her; stands silent with folded arms, looking at her intently.*]

ED. [*Continues.*] — It's a little like that dance we did in the Kirmess, don't you remember — ? [*Stops herself abruptly, meeting his eyes. Confused.*] That is — [*Hesitates.*]

HARD. Yes, I remember.

ED. [*Hurriedly.*] Maybe we'd better do that last bit over again. I think I can sing the air. [*Sings.*] *Tra la lala* —

[*They repeat the last few steps of the movement.*]

ED. [*Pauses, close to phonograph.* HARD. *directly in front of the horn, but some distance away.*] Now! I am supposed to fall dying. Oh, you're too far off! You have to catch me — [*Meets his eyes; same business as before.*] That is, you — you must — you mustn't — [*Falters; retreats against phonograph, as he advances.*]

HARD. [*Advances until he stands in front of phonograph-horn within a yard of it. In a strained voice.*] Here?

ED. [*Momentary panic.*] Don't! Don't come any nearer! [*Makes a nervous gesture, unconsciously jogging phonograph; it sets the machinery in motion with a click, and slight whirring sound as before; neither one notices it; ED. recovers herself a little, makes a desperate effort to appear natural and at ease. Laughs hysterically.*] Oh, didn't that sound absurd? I meant, of course, you don't *have* to be any nearer — that is, I mean — I — I — [*Halts helplessly.*]

HARD. Edith! [*Makes a violent movement towards her, which, however, he immediately controls, keeping position in front of phonograph-horn.*] I — [*Stops, agitated.*]

ED. [*Agitated, imploring.*] Oh, please — !

HARD. [*With an effort.*] Don't be afraid. I'll not forget myself again — not altogether anyhow. You're another man's wife, and I'm not such a sweep that — [*Pause.*] — I ought not to have come back.

ED. [*Tremulously.*] Why, you — you had to come back some time —

HARD. [*Wearily.*] Oh yes, I had to some time . . . [*Pause.*] . . . I pretended to myself that it was all over . . . that I didn't care any more, but . . . [*Pause. Wildly.*] Oh, Edith, *why* did you — *why* — ?

ED. [*Alarmed. Springs to his side, laying a hand on his arm. Glances towards R. U.*] Hush! Hush! They will hear you!

[*Both now directly in front of phonograph-horn.*]

HARD. [*With bitterness.*] Well? Don't they all know it already?

ED. [*Firmly.*] Even if they do, Dick, we must still act our parts.

HARD. [*Savagely.*] *We!* That's good! [*Laughs.*]

We must act our parts! Mine is so easy. I'm only the man that loved you, that you trifled with and threw away. All I have to do is to look on amiably while you marry somebody else, and behave as if nothing had happened. What part have you to act? Why, none at all! You haven't a regret in the world. You are a beautiful and charming woman, most happily and successfully married —

ED. Am I?

[*A pause; they face each other; she droops her head.*]

HARD. [*Makes a movement towards her; hoarsely and trembling.*] Edith!

ED. [*Retreats a step, but still in front of horn. Agitated.*] No, no! You can't — you must not —!

[*Their eyes meet. HARD. drops his arms and half turns aside. A pause.*]

ED. Dick. . . . [*Stops, forces herself to speak calmly, though brokenly and with many pauses.*] Listen to me. You asked me just now why . . . why I did this . . . why I married him . . . I don't know! Girls are like that. They don't know what they want, they don't know their own minds. . . . In spite of all the talk, they don't really know, they don't *dream* what . . . what being married is . . . they don't know what they're doing. . . . You talk about my having no part to act. There's not a day, not an hour of my life when I'm not acting one! I don't do it for the world, I don't do it for myself, I do it for . . . [*Stops. Makes a gesture.*] . . . for him!

HARD. [*Looks at her searchingly.*] For him?

[*ED. moves her head assentingly.*]

HARD. For poor Bunny! [*Pause.*] Though I don't know why I say that. He is happy.

ED. [*Same manner.*] Yes . . . I try to make him happy. . . . I owe him that much, don't I? . . . Suppose I have spoiled my own life, why should I spoil his? . . . And it takes so little . . . I did wrong to marry him. . . .

HARD. Oh . . . ! [*Makes a movement.*]

ED. [*Checks him with a gesture.*] Oh yes! It was wrong, because there was one thing at least that I knew very well. I knew that I didn't love him. I thought it didn't matter, but . . .

[*A slight pause. The phonograph, running down, comes to a stop with another faint click.*]

ED. [*Goes on with a gesture, a short sigh.*] Well, it's over! There's nothing for me now but to stick to the bargain.

HARD. The bargain?

ED. Yes. I am his wife. He loves me. . . . He thinks that I love him. . . . I want to do right . . . [*Pause.*] . . . We can't see each other this way again, Dick —

HARD. [*Interrupts.*] Oh, Edith, I promise you — I swear I — I won't — I —

ED. [*Stops him with a gesture. Resolutely.*] No. We are just a man and a woman, and presently — [*Shakes her head.*] — No, it can't be. We couldn't help this meeting today — and this dance — it was just accident, and we have to carry it off the best we can. But it's the kind of accident that we mustn't let happen a second time. [*Goes slowly U.*]

[*Enter JACK. R. U.*]

HARD. [*Follows her.*] Oh, you are hard!

ED. I am right!

JACK. [*At door R. U. holding it open deferentially.*] Madame —

ED. [*Gaily.*] We're coming at last! I've put him through such a drill! [*As HARD. reaches her side, holds out her hand to him with a sweeping curtsey.*] Now then, Mr. Harding, that first step, please! [*Sings air of dance.*] Tra la la la la-la-! [*Exeunt, hands held high, practicing step.*]

CURTAIN

ACT II

[Enter R. U. MRS. H., DOR. and ED. in one group. After them the men in another group. All business of talking and laughing, as they come down, and scatter about room. Enter JACK. last of all and some distance behind the others with tray of coffee-service.]

DOR. [To ED. as they come down.] — So that was the end of it as far as I know. [To MRS. H.] You've never heard of them since, have you?

MRS. H. Not a word! [Sits R.] The doctor says — [Breaks off. To WASH.] Would you mind drawing up my little coffee-table, please? [WASH. business of moving table in front of her.] Oh, thank you! Jackson is so — [Turns head and sees JACK. coming down.] Ah, here he is! [To ED.] My dear, I always forget! Is it one lump or two?

[Business of pouring coffee; JACK. passing about with cups; men lighting cigarettes, etc. LECL. stands R. in front of fireplace; DOR. sitting on arm of lounge close to MRS. H.; WASH. and HARD. at C. ED. and DR. H. U. C. in terrace-doorway. Exit JACK. L. U.]

DR. H. [During above business, steps outside, and can be seen surveying the sky, re-enters room, exchanges a word with ED. Raises voice, addressing the room.] I'm afraid we're going to have a rainy night for our rehearsal. The moon is coming up, but it's beginning to cloud over.

WASH. Oh, I say, the moon will be later to-morrow night!

ED. [*Comes down.*] All the better! We'll have more time to dress.

DOR. [*Rises.*] I suppose we ought to go and change now —

MRS. H. [*Interrupts, expostulating.*] Oh, finish your coffee first, Dolly, you surely can take time for *that*!

HARD. That reminds me! I don't believe I can get into Cliff Patton's clothes. Does it make any difference if I stay this way?

WASH. Better try 'em on anyhow, hadn't you? You know you may have to appear for him to-morrow, too.

[WASH., HARD., DR. H. *business of talking together at c.*]

LECL. [*Finishes coffee. Sets cup on mantelpiece. Sings.*] Tra, la, la, I don't have to change *my* clothes! Tra, la, la, teedle — deedle-doo! [*Hands in pockets, legs spread wide apart, complacent grin.*]

WASH. [*Good-humored, a little contemptuous.*] Why, you've got the star part anyhow, Bunny. You don't have to do anything to speak of!

LECL. I should worry about that, shouldn't I? [*Sings.*] I should worry — urry — urry — [*Stops suddenly*] — Oh, doctor, I've just remembered something! Did Jackson get the revolver?

DR. H. [*Going u. with WASH. and HARD. answers over his shoulder.*] Yes, this afternoon. It's there.

MRS. H. On the mantelpiece, Mr. LeClere. [*Rises, business of talking with ED. and DOR. L. D. All three with backs turned to LECL.*]

LECL. [*Searches mantelpiece; sings in an undertone.*] I should worry — urry — urry — oo! [*Stops.*] *Where* on the mantelpiece? I don't see it! Oh, here're the shells, though! [*Takes up boxes, looks at them carelessly,*

begins tossing them up and catching them alternately. Sings.]

Where, oh, where has my little gun gone?
Oh where, oh where has it gone?

[Enter JACK. L. U. Surveys the room, business of going about, gathering up coffee-cups, liqueur-glasses, etc.]

DR. H. *[Turns from others. Calls to LECL. impatiently.]* Why, right there, under your hand! *[To HARD.]* You put it back, didn't you?

HARD. *[Comes down.]* Yes. Wait, I'll find it. *[R. at mantel.]* Here you are, Bunny! *[Hands LECL. the revolver.]*

LECL. Why, it wasn't under my hand at all! It was behind the clock. No wonder I couldn't find it. *[Puts one box of shells on mantel, and opens the other, dropping half a dozen shells on the rug. Glances at them carelessly.]* Hello! Look at 'em spill!

HARD. *[A little sharply.]* Here, you ought to handle cartridges more carefully, even if they are blanks! *[Stoops, feels about, and gathers them up.]*

LECL. Hoo! They can't hurt anything! Let's load her up! *[Selects shells from box, sets box on mantel, and fits shells into revolver. Sings in an undertone.]* I should worry — urry — urry — oo!

[All three women turn, watch LECL. nervously.]

MRS. H. *[Nervous.]* Oh, wouldn't one of those cartridge-things be enough, Mr. LeClere?

LECL. *[Waggishly.]* I might miss Edith the first shot, you know. *[Finishes loading revolver, brandishes it around.]* Wow! I'm the Pink-Eyed Panther of the Prairies and this is my day to purr! Wow! *[Same business.]*

HARD. [*During above, straightens up, business of beginning to fit shells back into box, picks up lid, looks at it. Loud exclamation. Springs at LECL. seizing his arm. Struggles with him. Shouts.*] Drop it! Give it here! [*Wrenches revolver from LECL. and pushes him away roughly.*]

[*Sensation.*]

MRS. H. [*Screams.*] Oh, John — !

[*DOR. screams. ED. stands rigid, silent. DR. H. and WASH. rush across to HARD. and LECL. Chairs upset. Uproar. JACK. at L. U. about to leave room with tray, halts at door, startled.*]

[*LECL., WASH., DR. H. all speak at once. Loud, excited.*]

LECL. [*Surprised and angry.*] Here, what the mischief — ?

WASH. [*Motions to separate them.*] Look out, you fellows — !

DR. H. What's all this, boys? Dick — ?

HARD. [*A little out of breath, holds revolver in one hand, holds out the box of shells with the other.*]

DR. H. [*Fumbles with eyeglass, peering.*] Number Thirty-Two —

WASH. [*Startled, snatches box.*] They're loaded, doctor! They aren't blanks! They're loaded! By Jove — ! [*Halts, appalled.*]

DR. H. [*Shouts.*] Hey? What? [*Snatches box from WASH. and examines it.*]

LECL. [*Aghast.*] Loaded? Why, you all said they were blanks! [*Looks around defiantly.*] At least, somebody said they were blanks. I didn't know they were loaded. How was I to know that? I was just having a little fun —

WASH. [*To HARD.*] I guess you were just in time, Dick.

HARD. [*Removes shells from revolver.*] Couldn't help being a little rough with you, Bunny. I was afraid you were going to fire.

LECL. [*Good-tempered.*] Oh, it's all right, old man, now that I know what's the matter. I thought you'd suddenly gone off your head. [*Pauses, startled look.*] Just think! I might have killed somebody! [*Pauses again, overcome with horror, gets out handkerchief and wipes forehead.*] Good Lord!

MRS. H. [*With some satisfaction.*] I've felt all along that there would be some accident with those murderous things.

DOR. [*Laughs hysterically.*] But there hasn't been any yet, Mrs. Hitchcock. Nothing's happened.

DR. H. [*Grave.*] That is pure luck. [*Turns, looking up-stage. Gesture.*] Jackson!

JACK. Yes, sir. [*Sets tray down. Comes down, manner anxious but straightforward.*]

DR. H. [*Seriously, but not in a harsh or hectoring way.*] Where did you get these things?

JACK. At Darby's, the sporting-goods place, sir.

DR. H. What did you ask for?

JACK. I asked for a gun, and a box of blank cartridges to fit it, like you told me to, sir.

DR. H. Didn't you look at them?

JACK. Well, sir, I looked at the gun, but the man give me them shells already wrapped up, so I didn't open 'em.

HARD. You and I opened the package, doctor. *We* ought to have looked —

DR. H. [*Interrupts.*] But we *did* look and it said blanks — [*Pauses*] — I'm positive it said blanks.

WASH. [*At mantel, picks up remaining box.*] What's this?

HARD. [*Perplexed.*] I thought it said blanks, too. But —

[WASH. *holds out the other box. They look at it, passing it from one to another.*]

LECL. [*Triumphant.*] There! You see! I knew it! Some of you said they were blanks — you told me they were blanks, and here they are! [*Displays box, pointing to label.*] Blanks! How was *I* to know? *Everybody makes mistakes sometimes!*

JACK. [*To DR. H.*] If you please, sir, should I have — ?

DR. H. [*Interrupts hastily.*] Never mind, Jackson— I mean you weren't in the least to blame. [*To others.*] If anything had happened, it would have been my fault —

HARD. [*Interrupts.*] No, no, doctor, it would have been more *my* fault. I didn't notice that the two boxes weren't the same. The salesman must have made a mistake — or he may have thought that Jackson didn't know what to ask for. [*To LECL.*] The thing is now, to be careful not to get them mixed up. [*Business of showing the two boxes side by side to LECL. and counseling him earnestly.*]

JACK. [*Hesitatingly to DR. H.*] I — I'm very sorry, sir —

DR. H. [*Kindly.*] Yes, I understand, I know. Nobody can blame you for anything, Jackson. And as long as no harm was done — thank the Lord! — why, all's well that ends well! That's all, you may go!

[JACK. *starts u.*]

DR. H. [*Calls after him.*] Oh, wait a minute — !

[JACK. *returns.*]

DR. H. [*Continuing as JACK. comes back.*] I want you to come back here directly, and take off the record — the one that's on the machine now, the one they were talking into, you recollect — ? [*Pauses.*]

HARD. [*Turns from LECL. Calls.*] Oh, Doctor Hitchcock — !

JACK. [*To DR. H.*] Yes, sir.

DR. H. [*To HARD.*] Yes, presently! [*To JACK. continuing.*] And put on the dance-record, the same one they've been using, and get everything ready here. And then I want you to be ready to come upstairs and help the gentlemen with their costumes. I'll ring when they need you.

JACK. Yes, sir. [*Exit L. U.*]

DR. H. [*Comes down, joining group of men.*] Well — ?

[*MRS. H. goes U. with DOR. and ED. Business of talking together.*]

[*DOR. R. U. Calls.*] Since we're all alive still and nobody's partner has had an eye shot out, hadn't we better begin? It's getting late. *We're* going to dress.

WASH. [*Down c. Turns.*] All right, so are we! We can give you girls fifteen minutes start and beat you at that! [*Turns to other men.*]

DOR., ED., MRS. H. O — oh! Listen to him! [*Exeunt R. U. talking and laughing.*]

[*DR. H. during above business of taking boxes of shells from HARD. listening to the latter, and nodding assent. Stands, looking around, rubs chin, considers. Moves L. undecidedly, followed by HARD. Raises voice, addressing the others.*] Well now, gentlemen, we've got to lock these things up, so there'll be no possibility of another mistake —

WASH. [*Interrupts.*] Anyhow those loaded ones ought to be put some place where Bunny can't get at 'em, and get 'em mixed with the others!

LECL. [*Protesting. Indignant.*] Say, you talk as if I hadn't any sense!

DR. H. [*Rather reprovngly to WASH.*] Why, any of us might get them mixed, Washburn. They look exactly alike —

HARD. [*Interrupts.*] Yes, but the loaded ones are a good deal heavier than the others. [*To LECL.*] You know? I showed you just now.

LECL. [*Impatient.*] Yeah, you showed me. Next thing somebody'll be showing me my A-B-C's!

DR. H. I'll tell you what. We'll put the charged shells in this right-hand drawer of the cabinet — [*Does so.*] — as it's the only one that happens to have a lock — [*Business of attempting to turn key in lock.*] — in working-order, that is — [*Struggles with key ineffectually.*] — then we'll feel safe — [*Same business.*] — Confound the thing! [*Withdraws key, looks it all over through eye-glasses; pulls drawer out and inspects lock; attempts to fit key again.*]

WASH. You can't have the right key, doctor.

HARD. Let me try.

DR. H. [*Gives up. To HARD.*] All right, see what you can do with it! [*To WASH.*] There isn't any other. [*Mops forehead; gesture towards cabinet; sardonically.*] It's an antique, you know! Sixteenth century — [*Pauses to watch HARD.*]

[*HARD. Same business with key.*]

LECL. [*Eagerly.*] Here, let me!

[*HARD. resigns. LECL. same business.*]

DR. H. [*Continues.*] Italian — beautiful example — ditto price —

LECL. [*Loud and jubilant.*] I've fixed it!

[*All movement of interest.*]

LECL. [*Turns key in lock.*] There! See? It's locked!
[*Takes hold of knob of drawer, whereupon the drawer pulls out.*] Oh! [*Blankly.*] No, it isn't either!

[DR. H., WASH., HARD. *burst of laughter.*]

WASH. [*Recovers.*] Oh well, what's the use of taking any more time to it? We all know about the shells, and nobody wants to monkey with 'em.

DR. H. [*Hesitates an instant.*] Well — but — here are these other shells. Where had we better put *them*? Left-hand drawer? [*Does so; glances around interrogatively.*] Everybody understands now? Charged right, blanks left. *That's settled!* [*Goes U.*]

WASH. [*About to go U.*] Fire in the air, fire at the ceiling, you know, Bunny. Then you can't do any harm, anyhow — even if you *try!* [*Goes U.*]

HARD. [*Lingers; earnestly.*] All you've got to do is to *look* at the boxes and be *sure* —

LECL. [*Interrupts; good-natured but ruffled.*] Oh, come off! You fellows make me tired, everybody telling me something different, and acting as if I was about seven years old!

[HARD. *shrugs shoulders, goes U., joining others. Exeunt, talking, R. U.*]

LECL. [*At cabinet L. D. back to stage, continues talking, not noticing that they have left the room.*] I guess I know as much about it as any of you. [*Handles revolver.*] I wasn't to blame any more than the rest of you. You didn't notice those shells either, Harding, you said so yourself! [*Turns; sees that the room is empty.*] Oh!
[*Sits L. D. playing with revolver.*]

[*Enter JACK. L. U. Comes down; pauses, seeing*

LECL.; *crosses R. D. speaking as he passes in front of*
LECL.]

JACK. Excuse me, sir. [*Goes to phonograph.*]

LECL. [*Acknowledges JACKSON's presence with a slight movement, and inarticulate sound.*] Ump! [*Same business with revolver.*]

JACK. [*Business of examining phonograph; tests key by which the instrument is set going; tests winding-crank, and finds it run down; ejaculates under his breath.*] Huh! [*Straightens up, contemplating machine thoughtfully. Glances at LECL. Hesitates. Speaks respectfully.*] Beg pardon, Mr. LeClere — ?

LECL. [*Indifferent; same business with revolver.*] Hey?

JACK. If you please, sir, could you tell me if you or any of the other ladies and gentlemen was talking into this? While I wasn't here, sir, I mean?

LECL. [*Glances; indifferent.*] Nope!

JACK. Thank you, sir. [*Turns to phonograph again. Repeats business, puzzled.*]

LECL. [*Same business.*]

[*A slight pause.*]

LECL. That was a narrow shave we had a while ago, Jackson. [*Cocks trigger, and sights weapon at JACK.*]

JACK. [*Beginning to readjust machine, absorbed, answers mechanically civil.*] Yes, indeed, sir.

LECL. That is, it *would* have been, if I had fired. [*Emphatic.*] But I wasn't going to, you know. I was just going like this, for fun — ! [*Flourishes revolver about, clicking the trigger.*]

JACK. [*Glances up; sees LECL. pointing revolver straight at him, and clicking it, jumps back involuntarily. Loud voice.*] Look out! — [*Halts, confused.*] — I mean — I — I beg your pardon, sir — but — [*Edges to one side,*

trying to get out of range.] — is it — is it quite safe, sir?

LECL. [*Same business, following him with the revolver.*] Safe with me? Safe as a church! Why, I wouldn't hurt anybody! I know all about guns!

JACK. [*Nervous, watching him.*] Do you, sir? I don't! I couldn't hardly tell which end that goes off at.

LECL. [*Superior air.*] Why, this end, Jackson, right here, see? [*Demonstrates; withdraws arm, turns revolver so that it points into his own face, squinting into the muzzle.*] It takes a careful man to handle 'em.

JACK. [*Returns to phonograph, but continues to keep a wary eye on LECL.*] Yes, sir. So I see, sir.

LECL. Now this evening when I have to fire it, you know, I won't aim at Mrs. LeClere —

JACK. [*Interrupts with an involuntary ejaculation.*] I should hope not — [*Stops, confused.*] — that is —

LECL. [*Not noticing him.*] I'll point it this way. [*Holds revolver awkwardly pointed upward at side of his head.*] Then, you see, it will go off straight up in the air.

JACK. [*Eyes him, perturbed but respectful.*] I — I beg pardon, Mr. LeClere, but it looks to me like it would blow your ear off that way.

LECL. [*Good-humored, patient.*] No, it won't! I know where I'm aiming! And besides it won't be loaded.

JACK. [*Same manner.*] But there'll be powder in it, sir — gunpowder or something like that, won't there? And I was just thinking in case of some mistake —

LECL. [*Interrupts, still good-humored, but a little decided.*] There isn't going to be any mistake, Jackson. I know what I'm about.

JACK. [*Respectful.*] Yes, sir. To be sure, sir. [*Resumes business with phonograph.*]

[LECL. *lays revolver on table. Sits with arms clasped around one knee, idly watching JACK. A short pause.*]

LECL. What's that you're doing?

JACK. Changing the record, sir.

LECL. Oh! [*Yawns. Gets up; lights cigarette; strolls across R. and stands watching JACK. a moment.*] Why, it's a good deal of trouble, isn't it?

JACK. [*Busy.*] Not ordinarily, sir. But this time the machine is fixed for to *take* a record, and it's a little different.

LECL. *Take* a record? Oh yes, I see. That's the one they were talking into — or *onto* — just before dinner.

JACK. Yes, sir.

[*A pause; same business for both; JACK. with careful movements withdraws the recording cylinder from machine, showing it to be covered with a fringe of fine wax filament.*]

LECL. [*Exclaims.*] Hello! It's broken!

JACK. [*Smiles civilly.*] Oh no, sir! Them things is what the needle makes tracking along when the voice hits it, you know. You brush 'em off with this here. [*Takes up a small fine-haired hat-broom, and dusts the fringes off. Displays cylinder.*] You see, sir, it's all right.

LECL. [*Impressed.*] By Jove! A person's voice can do that!

JACK. Yes, sir — at least that's how they explained it to me at the phonograph place. [*Holds cylinder under his eyes, inspecting it closely. Purses lips, shakes head.*]

LECL. [*Profoundly interested.*] Isn't that marvellous? What do you do next?

JACK. [*Lowers cylinder, baffled air.*] Do next? Why, nothing, sir.

LECL. [*Astonished.*] D'ye mean to tell me that's all there is to it? Can you put that thing on the machine just as it is, and run it off like any other record?

JACK. Sure you can! [*Recollects himself, confused.*] I mean yes indeed, sir!

LECL. And hear Mr. Washburn and Miss Pierce talking?

JACK. Yes, sir.

LECL. [*Deep emphasis.*] Well, I'll be darned! [*Still incredulous. To JACK.*] Do it now?

JACK. If you like, sir. [*Moves towards phonograph.*]

LECL. I hadn't any idea it was that easy! [*Sudden idea.*] Oh say, Jackson! Stop! Wait!

JACK. [*Pauses.*] Sir?

LECL. [*Confidential.*] Why, say, Jackson, you just put it back on the machine and fix it up to record some more, will you? Then *I'll* sing into it, and *then* you can take it off again, and fix it the *other* way, and *then* we can hear *my* voice too, see?

[*A slight pause, JACK. inspects cylinder again; shakes head.*]

JACK. I'm afraid you can't do that, Mr. LeClere. There ain't room on this here.

LECL. [*Surprised.*] Why, did that little bit of talking cover it all? The records you buy — Caruso and George Cohan, you know, and all those people — they're a lot longer than *that*.

JACK. Well sir, there'd ought to be half to three-quarters of this left bare. But somebody else has come along and talked into it —

LECL. [*Interrupts.*] How d'ye know?

JACK. Well, if you'll just look at it, sir —

[*LECL. motions to take it from him.*]

JACK. [*Warning gesture.*] Careful, please, Mr. LeClere, they break awful easy. If you was to let it fall — You've got to take it on your two fingers like I've got it —

[*Business of passing the cylinder from one to the other.*]

JACK. Now you can see for yourself, sir, she's full up!

LECL. [*Inspects cylinder, turning it around on his two fingers.*] Oh, it's all over little fine lines — no, here's a bare spot — [*Same business.*]

JACK. [*Hovering about him; anxious.*] There wasn't nobody talking right at that place, sir. But the young lady didn't do all the rest, I *know*!

LECL. [*Same business.*] Can you tell where she left off?

JACK. No, sir. But she wasn't talking long enough. And besides I left her turned off and wound up —

LECL. [*Looks up from cylinder, amazed.*] Her? Who?

JACK. I mean the machine, sir. And when I come back, she was turned on and run down! She didn't talk *that* much —

LECL. [*Same business.*] She?

JACK. I mean the young lady, sir. That was the last one that talked into it, that I know of — so there must have been somebody after her.

LECL. [*Shakes head; hands cylinder back; business of passing it from one to the other.*] Not while the rest of us were around, and we were all here all the time — [*Interrupts himself.*] — well, except when we went to dinner, and *then* my wife and Mr. Harding were here for a while practicing their dance. *They* weren't doing any *talking*.

JACK. Not unless for a bit of a joke — to kind of take the other ladies and gentlemen by surprise. But

what I guess to have happened would be that when you and the other gentlemen had that turn-up about the pistol, you know, sir — ?

LECL. [*Lights cigarette. Nods.*]

JACK. [*Continues.*] Everybody was excited-like, sir, and I wouldn't wonder if one of you knocked into the machine and set her going by accident. That would be *my* guess.

LECL. Could one do that without knowing it?

JACK. Yes, sir. Oh yes, they could do it easy!

LECL. Well, but what kind of a record would it make?

JACK. Just a lot of mixed-up noises, I expect, sir. According to whoever happened to be standing in front of the horn, you know. [*Stands at phonograph, turning cylinder on his fingers, plainly filled with curiosity.*] Would you like for me to try it, sir?

LECL. [*Interested.*] Yes. Go ahead!

[*Bell rings off-stage, distantly, but distinct.*]

JACK. [*In the act of putting cylinder back on machine, stops.*] There's my bell! If you'll excuse me, Mr. LeClere — ?

LECL. Finish putting this on first.

JACK. [*Hesitates.*] Dr. Hitchcock —

LECL. [*Interrupts, good-natured.*] That's all right, Jackson, I'll explain to him. [*Feels in pocket.*] You fix this thing — I want to hear it. [*Gives money.*]

JACK. Very good, sir, thank you! [*Pockets money; business of rapidly adjusting machine; a silence; bell rings again longer.*]

JACK. [*Straightens up; hurriedly.*] It's ready now, sir. [*Turns it on; machine clicks and begins to whirr as before.* JACK. runs U.]

LECL. [*Calls.*] Hold on, Jackson! Tell me how to stop it!

[*Bell rings two or three times furiously.*]

JACK. [*At door R. U. Calls back in a frenzy of haste.*] Just let her run down, please, sir! [*Exit.*]

[*As JACK. closes door behind him, the phonograph begins abruptly, reproducing WASHBURN's voice.*] Hello, there!

LECL. [*Starts violently, wheels quickly around so as to survey every side of the room.*] Hey?

THE PHONO. [*Reproducing WASHBURN's voice.*] Yours truly, Thomas R. Washburn.

[*LECL. recognizes the phonograph, slaps his leg, drops into chair down c. facing machine, burst of chuckles. Waiting and grinning.*]

[*A slight pause.*]

THE PHONO. [*In DOROTHY's voice.*] Oh, gracious, I haven't an idea what to say —

[*Pause. LECL. listens, broad grin.*]

THE PHONO. [*DOROTHY's voice.*] Why, it's perfectly stupefying —

[*Pause, machine whirring.*]

THE PHONO. [*DOROTHY's voice.*] Like when people stay too long calling, and everybody runs out —

[*Pause.*]

THE PHONO. [*DOROTHY's voice.*] Runs out of talk, I mean, of course —

[*Pause.*]

THE PHONO. [*DOROTHY's voice.*] How much of the thing have I used up, Jackson? An inch? — Oh, mercy, I didn't mean for *that* to get taken down! Can't you stop it? [*High exclamation.*] Oh, Mr. —

[*Silence. Machine whirrs.*]

LECL. That must have been when Harding came in,

you know — [*Interrupts himself with a gesture.*] Pshaw, I keep thinking it's a real person — [*Business of lighting cigarette.*]

THE PHONO. [*HARDING's voice.*] Edith! I —

[*Pause.* LECL. *stops, startled in the act of lighting cigarette, holds burning match in his fingers, staring at phonograph.*]

THE PHONO. [*HARDING's voice.*] Don't be afraid. I'll not forget myself again — not altogether anyhow. You're another man's wife, and I'm not such a sweep that —

[*Pause.* LECL. *same business, rigid, match burns down to his fingers.*]

THE PHONO. [*HARDING's voice.*] I ought not to have come back.

[*Pause.* LECL. *vaguely looks at his fingers, drops the burnt-out match.*]

THE PHONO. [*HARDING's voice.*] Oh yes, I had to some time —

[*Pause.*]

THE PHONO. [*HARDING's voice.*] I pretended to myself that it was all over — that I didn't care any more, but —

[*Pause.*]

THE PHONO. [*HARDING's voice.*] Oh, Edith, *why* did you, *why* —

THE PHONO. [*EDITH's voice.*] Hush! *Hush!* They will hear you!

THE PHONO. [*HARDING's voice.*] Well? Don't they know it already?

LECL. [*Makes a wild movement towards phonograph, clenched fists, furious voice.*] That's a lie, you — [*Recollects himself. Falls back trembling.*]

THE PHONO. [EDITH'S *voice*.] Even if they do, Dick, we must still act our parts.

THE PHONO. [HARDING'S *voice*.] *We!* That's good! [Laughs.] *We* must act our parts! Mine is so easy. I'm only the man that loved you, that you trifled with and threw away. All I have to do is to look on amiably while you marry somebody else, and behave as if nothing had happened. What part have *you* to act? Why, none at all! You haven't a regret in the world. You are a beautiful and charming woman, most happily and successfully married —

THE PHONO. [EDITH'S *voice*.] 'Am I?

[Pause. LECL. *waits, tense*.]

THE PHONO. [HARDING'S *voice*.] *Edith!*

THE PHONO. [EDITH'S *voice*.] No, no! You *can't* — you *must not* — !

[Pause.]

LECL. [After listening rigidly as before for a second, suddenly springs at phonograph as before with raised fists. Violently.] Damnation! You dare touch her, you — [Recollects himself. Falls back trembling.]

THE PHONO. [EDITH'S *voice*.] Dick. . . . Listen to me. You asked me just now why . . . why I did this . . . why I married him . . . I don't know! Girls are like that. They don't know what they want, they don't know their own minds. . . . In spite of all the talk, they don't really know, they don't *dream* what . . . what being married is . . . they don't know what they're doing. . . . You talk about my having no part to act. There's not a day, not an hour of my life when I'm not acting one! I don't do it for the world, I don't do it for myself, I do it for . . . for *him!*

THE PHONO. [HARDING'S voice.] For him?

[Pause.]

THE PHONO. [HARDING'S voice.] For poor Bunny!

[Pause.]

THE PHONO. [HARDING'S voice.] Though I don't know why I say that. He is happy.

THE PHONO. [EDITH'S voice.] Yes . . . I try to make him happy . . . I owe him that much, don't I? . . . Suppose I have spoiled my own life, why should I spoil his? . . . And it takes so little . . . I did wrong to marry him. . . .

THE PHONO. [HARDING'S voice, interrupting.] Oh . . . !

THE PHONO. [EDITH'S voice.] Oh yes! It was wrong, because there was one thing at least that I knew very well. I knew that I didn't love him. I thought it didn't matter, but . . .

[Phonograph ceases abruptly with a faint click.]

LECL. [During above sits down c. head in hands. After a slight pause, raises head.] Well, go on! [Starts up.] Go on, why don't you? — [Recollects himself.] Oh! [Stands staring and listening an instant; realizes that phonograph has run down; drops into chair in former attitude.]

[A short pause.]

[Enter EDITH R. U. in Pierrette costume. Comes down, business of touching hair, dress, etc. Sees LECL.]

ED. Oh, is that you, Franklin?

[LECL. starts, rises, looks at phonograph, turns, stands looking at ED. silently.]

ED. [Glances around.] Nobody else down yet? [Sits L.] I thought I heard you talking. [A slight pause.]

LECL. I wasn't talking.

ED. [*Indifferently, same business with dress, etc.*] How odd!

LECL. [*Sudden fierceness.*] Why odd? What's odd about it?

ED. [*Surprised.*] Nothing, Franklin. I only meant that that was a funny notion for me to have. Of course you wouldn't be sitting here talking to yourself.

LECL. [*Gives a kind of grunt.*] Oh! [*Stands same position, glowering at her.*]

[*A slight pause.*]

ED. How do you like the costume?

LECL. [*With a painful effort to be natural.*] It's beautiful! [*Suddenly breaks down.*] But you are always beautiful, Edith! I can't blame him — [*Struggles to control himself.*] I — I mean I couldn't blame any man for — for — [*Sinks into chair with a groan, covers face with hands.*]

ED. [*Starts up, surprised and concerned; goes to him.*] Franklin! What is the matter? You're sick! I thought you didn't look right! [*Puts arm about his shoulders.*] What is it?

LECL. [*Shakes her off roughly; rises; in a hoarse voice.*] Nothing. I'm all right.

ED. [*Holds his hand; troubled.*] No, you're not all right. I believe you have a fever! Do let me do something. I can get Dr. Hitchcock —

LECL. [*Interrupts roughly; pushes her away.*] No, I tell you! Let me alone!

ED. [*Maternal, soothing, patient.*] Now, Franklin, the doctor's used to it. It won't be any trouble to him, and he can probably give you something — some simple thing that won't be disagreeable to take, and that will make you all right in a minute. Do be sensible —

LECL. [*Interrupts.*] Why, you don't expect such a fool as *I* am — such a *blind* fool — to be *sensible*, surely?

ED. [*Withdraws her arms, stands looking at him an instant; then with a movement of decision turns and starts u.*]

LECL. [*Strides after her; seizes her arm.*] Here, where're you going?

ED. [*Faces him resolutely.*] To get the doctor.

LECL. [*Raises voice harshly.*] No, you're not! You stay here with me. [*A pause. He looks at her fixedly; suddenly throws his arms around her, clutching her to him. Hoarsely and violently.*] You're mine anyhow! You belong to me! [*Brokenly but fiercely in agitation.*] Look here, kiss me! I mean. . . . You know what I mean. . . . As if you — as if you *meant* it — !

ED. [*Beginning to be a little frightened.*] Why, Franklin, I — why, I'll kiss you, of course, but — what is the matter with you?

LECL. [*Same manner.*] Kiss me!

[*She kisses him lightly on the cheek, and makes a movement to release herself.* LECL. *tightens his hold savagely, kisses her lips.*]

LECL. [*Same manner, choked voice.*] There! That's what I want! You know very well. . . . [*Threateningly.*] You needn't pretend you don't know. . . . You. . . .

[*ED. stands perfectly still in his arms, evidently frightened, but trying to keep her head.*]

LECL. [*Complete change of manner. In distress and self-abasement.*] Oh, Edith, I didn't hurt you? I was so rough — I didn't mean to be rough — I couldn't help it — I — I'm half-crazy — I'm so wretched —

[Clings to her as he drops into a chair with his face against her dress.] Oh, forgive me — ! [Voice breaks.]

ED. [Puzzled, uneasy, but regaining confidence.] You feel wretched? You are in pain? But if you'd only tell me, or let me get someone —

LECL. [Wildly.] No, no, don't, please don't! I — I wasn't quite myself for a minute! Say you forgive me! [Slight pause.]

ED. Not quite yourself? You mean you've — you've been drinking, Franklin?

[Slight pause.]

LECL. [Sinks back in chair. With an effort, not looking at her.] Yes. That's it. I've — been drinking.

ED. [Rather relieved.] Oh, that was it?

LECL. [Same manner.] Yes. You forgive me, Edith?

ED. Yes. But — [Hesitates.] — you'll be careful, Franklin? You won't do it again? I mean — [Very much embarrassed.] — you won't take too much champagne — you know? It's — it's so horrid — I don't like to talk about it —

LECL. I know. I won't do it again.

ED. I never knew you to before. You frightened me.

LECL. [Unhappily.] I know. But, Edith — [Beseechingly.] — you don't mind my kissing you? I mean other times, you know? [Goes on incoherently, without waiting for her to answer.] Because I — I can't help it — you're so pretty and sweet, and I — I love you, Edith. I can't help wanting to — to —

ED. [During above, self-possession entirely regained, coolly pushes up a chair with her foot until it is near enough, and sits on the arm of it, allowing him to continue clutching her hand. Composed. Smiling.] Can't help wanting to kiss me, Franklin? But why apologize?

I'm sure kissing between married people — married to each other! — is a respectable diversion.

LECL. [*Agonized entreaty.*] Oh, don't make fun of me, Edith, don't! I — I can't bear it from you. I don't mind other people — they all make fun of me. I know I'm — I'm nothing much. I can't say bright things the way the other fellows do — and I'm slow about seeing things — and — and I make awful breaks — and all that. I guess I haven't got much brains —

ED. [*Surprised and touched. Involuntary ejaculation.*] Oh, you poor dear! Don't —

LECL. [*Interrupts, at once violent and beseeching.*] No, no! I don't want you to pity me! I don't want you to be sorry for me! [*Increasing agitation and incoherence.*] I — I don't want you to be kind to me — and to try to make me happy — and — and all that! If you loved me you wouldn't ever think about being kind to me — [*Stops, passes hand over eyes, in a puzzled voice.*] — That sounds queer, but somehow I know it's the truth — I know now! [*Rises. Makes a movement to seize her in his arms.*] Oh, Edith!

ED. [*Shrinks back.*] Franklin! [*Glances around.*] You know somebody might come in, and it — it's — it looks a little foolish, you know — ?

LECL. [*Looks at her wistfully; drops his arms obediently; speaks calmly, though with effort.*] I thought you did, you see, Edith. All this while, I thought you did love me —

ED. [*Much troubled.*] But I do, Franklin! I — I'm very fond of you. Why, surely you — you —

LECL. [*Controlled manner.*] Not the way I've been trying to talk about — not the way I love you — ? [*Pauses interrogatively, as if waiting for her to answer.*]

ED. [*Head bowed.*] I — I —

LECL. I might have known that it wasn't to be expected. I might have known . . . [*Pause.*] . . . but I've just been telling myself all along that I was an awfully lucky fellow. It was just this evening that I . . . [*Hesitates.*] . . . I got to thinking . . . [*Hesitates.*] . . . Maybe there was some other man . . . [*Hesitates.*] . . . Maybe you'd made a mistake . . . [*Pause.*] . . . And here you are tied to *me*. . . . You might get to *hating* me. . . . It would be natural. . . . But you'd keep on being *kind to me*. . . . You'd think it was your duty . . . [*Sudden wild gesture.*] . . . Why, it's horrible! [*Desperate appeal.*] Can't you *see* how horrible it is?

ED. [*Uneasy.*] But, Franklin — you — why, you're morbid. Don't . . . [*Stumbles and hesitates*] . . . Don't think such things. It's not . . . it doesn't do any good, you know . . . [*Pauses. Suddenly.*] I don't believe you — you had too much to drink this evening at all! I believe you're going to be sick. You aren't *natural* — it's not like you to talk and act this way. You may have something — some kind of illness coming on. You know I *wanted* to go away and get out of this heat for a while, and you wouldn't. That may be what's the matter.

LECL. [*Looks at her.*] Well, we can go away now, Edith, if you're sure you want to.

[*A slight pause.*]

ED. [*With an effort.*] I think it would be better. [*Pauses. Turns from him and crosses slowly* L. D. LECL. *watches her. She speaks again resolutely.*] I'm sure it would be better.

[*A rising wind blows through room, fluttering papers, etc.*]

LECL. [*Looks after ED. fixedly.*] You're sure?

ED. [*Stands at table L. D. head bowed, absently arranging books, magazines, etc., on it.*] Yes. As soon as this tiresome pantomime thing is over — [*Interrupts herself, snatching her hand away with an exclamation.*] Oh!

LECL. Hey? [*Looks.*] Oh, the revolver! [*Crosses to table and picks it up.*] I laid it there a minute ago.

ED. [*A little hysterical, laughing.*] You've no idea how it startled me! It felt so cold!

[*Enter JACK. R. U. Comes down hurriedly.*]

[*Another light gust of wind.*]

ED. Here's Jackson! [*To JACK.*] Are they all ready?

JACK. [*At phonograph-cabinet, business of picking out record.*] Madame? Yes, madame, in a few minutes.

ED. At last! [*Goes U. and steps out on terrace.*]

LECL. [*Stands L. D. holding revolver, looking after ED. Turns slowly towards JACK. Watches him an instant. Abruptly drops revolver in pocket and crosses R. D. to JACK. Speaks peremptorily as JACK. begins to wind up the machine.*] What're you doing?

JACK. [*Looks around surprised at his tone. Respectfully.*] I'm going to put on the dance record now, Mr. LeClere.

LECL. [*Grunts.*] Oh!

JACK. [*Pauses. Respectfully.*] Was you wanting to hear this one again, sir?

LECL. [*Loud.*] No! [*Recollects himself, makes effort to control his voice.*] That is — I — [*Gives way. With violence.*] Take it off! What's the matter with you? Take it off!

JACK. [*Astonished but civil.*] Right away, sir.

[*Business of removing cylinder.*]

LECL. [*Watches him. As JACK. withdraws cylinder, stretches out his hand. Imperatively.*] Give it here!

JACK. [*Same manner.*] Yes, sir. If you'll please hold your fingers — ?

[*Just as JACK. is in the act of placing cylinder on LECLERE's extended fingers, the latter suddenly lowers them. Cylinder falls to the floor, shatters to bits.*]

LECL. }
JACK. } [*Together. Loud exclamation.*] Hi, look out!

[*A pause, both of them surveying fragments.*]

JACK. [*Ruefully.*] I beg your pardon, Mr. LeClere, I thought you had hold of it — [*Stoops and gathers up pieces.*]

LECL. [*Hastily and vigorously.*] Beg pardon nothing, Jackson! It was my fault! I — I — I must have jerked my hand somehow! [*Distressed, a little incoherent.*] I say, don't blame yourself — you didn't do it — don't worry! I'll tell Dr. Hitchcock I did it. Here — ! [*Fumbles hastily in pockets and brings out a handful of money. Without looking at it, forces it into JACKSON's hands.*] Here! No, no, that's all right! You've got to take it, you know. I don't want to get you into trouble!

JACK. [*During above, surprised but relieved, after a perfunctory movement of protest, takes money.*] You're very kind, sir — thank you, sir! I was a bit upset, seeing I was sure I'd been careful — that is — thank you, sir — only you don't need to —

[*Gust of wind.*]

LECL. [*Cuts JACKSON short.*] Well, that's all right now, hey? [*Nervously.*] Go ahead, put on the other record. [*Goes L. D. nervously; feels on table for smoking materials and lights cigarette. Sits. Regains self-control*]

a little. Tries to speak in light manner.] We won't say anything about it for fear of starting something, hey, Jackson? Ha, ha, ha!

JACK. [*Business of putting on other record.*] Just as you say, sir. But if anybody was to ask to hear it — ?

LECL. [*Hastily.*] Tell 'em there wasn't anything on it — just noises!

JACK. [*Interested.*] Really, sir?

LECL. Just noises — couldn't make out anything. I'll own up to breaking it if they ask *me*. Didn't *mean* to, of course. You — you understand that, Jackson?

JACK. [*With real feeling.*] It's very kind of you to take it on yourself, Mr. Bunny — [*Halts, aghast. Tries to go on in dire confusion.*] Mr. LeClere! I — I'm sorry, sir — that kind of slipped out — I — I hear the gentlemen calling you that all the time, and I — I —

LECL. [*Gently.*] That's all right, Jackson. I don't mind. I like you to call me that.

JACK. [*Relieved.*] Thank you, sir. I didn't intend any disrespect —

LECL. [*Interrupts.*] That all ready now? [*Indicates phonograph.*] I thought I heard 'em coming. [*Rises, starts U.*]

[*Wind.*]

JACK. [*Diffident but anxious.*] If I might take the liberty, Mr. LeClere — ?

[*LECL. stops, turns towards him.*]

JACK. [*Continues, same manner.*] When it comes to firing off that pistol, sir, if you'd make sure it wasn't pointing at nothing it could hurt, yourself nor nobody else? The way you was holding it I thought was — was kind of risky-like, even if there wasn't nothing but blank cartridges in it — they say them powder-burns

hurts something awful, sir — let alone the lockjaw — ?
[*Pauses, suggestive manner.*]

LECL. [*Stands still, staring at JACK. during above speech.*] The pistol? Why, yes . . . I'll be careful. I'm going to fire up. . . . [*Gesture.*] Like that, you know. I showed you. [*Turns slowly.*] I suppose I'd better load it now. [*Goes to cabinet L. D. Opens drawer on left side, takes out shells.*]

[*Gust of wind.*]

JACK. [*Following him at a little distance.*] Beg pardon, Mr. LeClere, you're sure them's the right ones?

LECL. [*Confident manner.*] Yes, of course? Don't you remember seeing Dr. Hitchcock put them there?

JACK. No, sir, I wasn't here —

ED. [*Enters hastily by terrace-doors. Calls.*] It's beginning to rain! [*Comes down a little way. To JACK.*] Oh, will you come here a minute, please?

[*ED. turns and goes U. again, followed by JACK. Business of his moving the doors, under her direction, from the wall where they have been leaning, and placing them in front of the opening at C. propping them in a slanting position. During above LECL. occasionally glancing towards them, opens right-hand drawer of cabinet, takes shell from box within and places it in chamber of the revolver. Hesitates an instant, considering, takes one or two shells out of each box and puts them in his pocket. Voices heard off L. LECL. drops revolver in pocket; walks to table L. D.; makes two or three attempts to light a cigarette with hands shaking; finally succeeds; stands L. D. smoking. Enter R. U. MRS. H., DOR. and WASH. Come down, business of talking and laughing.*]

WASH. [*To MRS. H. and DOR. as they come down.*] It was a scream! Never saw anything so funny in your

life! The coat was too small for Harding across the shoulders by that much — [*Gesture in demonstration.*] — but the doctor *would* insist on his wearing it — [*Interrupts himself with burst of laughter.*] — Ha, ha, ha! — [*Wags his head.*] — Harding's arms were just like this! [*Demonstrates.*] Roast-chicken style, you know!

MRS. H. Was *that* what was keeping you so long?

ED. [*Comes down.*] Oh, Mrs. Hitchcock, the rain was beginning to blow in, so I got Jackson to set the doors up that way. Is that all right?

MRS. H. [*Exclamation.*] What? *Rain?* I hadn't noticed it was raining! [*Turns, examining arrangement of doors through lorgnette. To ED.*] That was very thoughtful of you, my dear. I shouldn't have liked to have my floors spoiled. [*Business of talking to DOR. and ED. U. C.*]

WASH. [*Down c.*] Hello, Bunny! Why didn't you come upstairs and help? [*Goes to table L. D. and selects cigarette.*]

LECL. [*Abruptly.*] Where's Harding?

WASH. [*Glances at him surprised.*] He'll be along directly. What's the matter? Caught cold?

LECL. [*Vaguely.*] Eh? Caught cold? Me? I — I don't know — I guess not. Why?

WASH. [*Down c. smoking.*] Your voice sounded so queer all of a sudden. Sort of husky. [*Confidential.*] Say, how are you supposed to make these skull-caps stick on? Mine keeps working back.

LECL. [*Staring after ED. Rouses himself with an effort.*] Hey? Oh, why, here — [*LECL. and WASH. business with caps.*]

[*Enter R. U. DR. H. and HARD., ED., MRS. H., and DOR. turn towards them as they come down.*]

DOR. [*Makes a mock curtsey.*] Well, better late than never, Mr. Harding!

HARD. [*Good-humored.*] Sorry! Guilty but recommended to mercy! I've taken off and put on and taken off and put on *twice* —

DR. H. [*Interrupts.*] No use. He can't get into the costume. Why, the trousers won't —

MRS. H. [*Interrupts.*] *Never mind*, John, we understand! The question is: what are they going to do about rehearsing? It's pouring down rain; they can't possibly go out on the terrace.

DR. H. Hey? Raining? Tst, tst! That's too bad! [*Going U. C. almost at doors, encounters JACK. carrying a chair.*] Ah, Jackson — what's this?

JACK. [*During above scene has business of moving unobtrusively about the stage, clearing the furniture from the middle, setting chairs and tables against the walls, etc. Civilly.*] If you please, sir, I thought as long as it was raining, the young ladies and gentlemen would prob'ly want to practice inside like they've been doing — ? [*Pauses questioningly, holding chair.*]

DR. H. Um-hum — [*Considers.*] — Yes, I suppose they will. Wait a minute. [*Raises voice, addressing everybody.*] Well, what do you say? Go on with the rehearsal in here as usual, or wait for the rain to hold up?

DOR. Oh, have it in here!

WASH. That's what *I* say. It's time we got busy and learned this thing. Better not play around any longer. [*To LECL.*] Don't you think so?

LECL. [*Mechanically.*] Eh? Oh yes! Better not play around any longer.

DR. H. Very well. [*To JACK.*] We'll have to move

the lounge back here where we always put it — [*Indicates spot directly in front of terrace-opening.*] — for Mrs. Hitchcock and myself, you know — [*Business of JACK. taking hold of one end of lounge, DR. H. the other. They begin to shove it up-stage.*]

HARD. Here, doctor, let me — [*Takes hold of lounge.*]
[*They move the lounge to the position indicated.*]

MRS. H. [*During above business of talking with ED. and DOR. Turns, sees lounge. Ejaculates.*] Oh, John, dear, I can't sit there in that draught! I'd be laid up to-morrow with neuralgia as sure as fate — !

DR. H. [*Interrupts.*] Put on your shawl! Where's your shawl? If you women would only dress with some common-sense —

MRS. H. [*Interrupts, indignant.*] A shawl! The idea! Why, I haven't got such a thing as a shawl! Nobody wears a shawl nowadays! [*Business of arguing together up-stage.*]

DOR. [*To WASH. low voice.*] Grandma's in the ballet!
[*DOR. and WASH. business of whispering and laughing together. LECL. stands as before watching ED.*]

ED. [*To DR. H. persuasively.*] Couldn't the lounge be moved over that way a little? [*Gesture towards R. To MRS. H.*] And then with the screen behind it, you'd be perfectly safe. [*Appealing to HARD. and DR. H.*] Let's try it anyhow!

DR. H. [*Grumblingly.*] Well — !

MRS. H. [*Still ruffled.*] Well — !

[*They look on while HARD. and JACK. rearrange lounge, and unfold screen behind it. ED. business of arranging cushions, footstool, etc. In the new position the lounge is up-stage, somewhat to the right of C. and the screen opened to its fullest extent behind it completely conceals door R. U.*]

ED. [*Finishes business with cushions. To MRS. H.*] There! Now try *that!*

MRS. H. [*Sits.*] Oh, this is very nice! Come, John! There won't be any air on you either.

DR. H. [*Sits, still a little out of temper.*] Air? Air never hurt anybody yet! Anybody with some clothes on his back, that is!

[*Business of DR. H., MRS. H. talking together; ED. and HARD. business of talking together; JACK. comes down, takes position at phonograph; LECL. stands c. unnoticed by anybody, with eyes on ED. and HARD.*]

WASH. [*Down c. with DOR. Turns.*] Well? All ready?

ED. [*Turns.*] Why, Mr. Harding and I were just talking it over, and [*Pauses; hesitates.*] — he doesn't know all of Mr. Patton's part, of course — I only showed him the last of it, where we dance, you know. So don't you think we'd better just go over that and leave out the rest? It's getting so late. To-morrow —

LECL. [*Interrupts; loud voice.*] To-morrow?

[*Everybody slightly startled, turning to look at him. A slight pause.*]

ED. [*Patient, explanatory manner.*] Why yes, Franklin, we can take time to-morrow —

WASH. [*Interrupts.*] Cliff may get back —

DOR. [*Interrupts.*] And if he doesn't, you and Mr. Harding can practice that other part by yourselves, Edith, isn't that your idea?

ED. [*Startled.*] No, no, I didn't mean *that!* I — I — [*At a loss.*]

DOR. [*Goes on without heeding her.*] All right! [*To others.*] Let's go ahead now!

[*Business of all four moving to take positions.*]

DR. H. [*Burlesque dramatic manner.*] On with the dance! The *ancient* dance — ! [*Lights cigar.*]

WASH. [*Takes position.*] I think that's a pretty punk name. It doesn't sound like *anything*. '*An Ancient Dance*' — !

DR. H. [*Smoking.*] It's symbolic, isn't it? Has a double meaning, you know. Two gents and one lady — probably the most ancient dance known!

DOR. [*Enlightened.*] Oh! Isn't that cute?

[*All in position down c.*]

HARD. [*To LECL.*] Where do you stand?

LECL. [*Eyes on ED.*] Eh? [*Looks about vaguely.*]
Where do I — ? Why — I don't know —

WASH. [*Interrupts.*] By Jove, we forgot all about you, Bunny! Let's see — [*Looks around, considering.*]

LECL. [*Vaguely.*] It doesn't matter, does it?

WASH. [*Unconsciously candid.*] No, not a bit! Only you've got to be *somewhere*. [*To others.*] He ought to be off on one side where the audience can't see him — when he shoots her, I mean. Isn't that the way we decided on?

MRS. H. [*Nervously.*] Well, I hope it's not necessary for you to go banging around right in the room with us, Mr. LeClere? It's so noisy and — and *smelly*, like the Fourth of July.

DOR. He might go out in the hall. [*Points R. U.*]

WASH. Yes. Leave the door open though, Bunny.

[*They stand waiting while LECL. goes slowly U. At lounge he halts, turning to look at ED. Steps backward, and stumbles over MRS. HITCHCOCK'S footstool. Exclamation from everybody.*]

DR. H. [*A little testily.*] Dear me — ! [*Readjusts footstool under MRS. HITCHCOCK'S feet.*]

LECL. Hey? Oh! I beg your pardon, doctor, I didn't see where I was going. [*Looks at ED.*] Isn't she pretty to-night? [*Stands gazing at ED.*]

DR. H. Eh? [*Follows LECLERE'S eyes. Smiles; amused; indulgent.*] Oh yes! Very pretty! [*Turns away; business of talking to MRS. H.*]

[*Exit LECL. slowly R. U.*]

[*JACK. business of starting phonograph. Dance. Revolver-shot heard off. ED. sinks to floor C. HARD. comes to a stand-still abruptly, standing over her. DOR. and WASH. take attitudes R. and L. Music continues for a few seconds, as the shooting is timed towards the close of the dance.*]

WASH. [*Shouts at HARD. imperatively.*] Catch her! This is where you ought to catch her!

HARD. [*Taken aback.*] Oh, I didn't know — [*Stoops to help her up.*]

ED. [*Raises herself on one arm. Gesture.*] We didn't have time to rehearse this part!

[*HARD. helps her up; DR. H. and MRS. H. vigorous applause.*]

DR. H. [*Calls from up-stage.*] Fine! Splendid! Beautifully done! We don't miss Patton at all, Dick!

[*A gust of wind. Door R. U. slams. MRS. H. business of starting, shivering, and looking around alarmed. Dancers business of all talking almost at once.*]

DOR. [*To HARD.*] You have to be ready for her. Show him, Edith!

HARD. Is it where the music changes? Like this — ? [*Whistles.*]

ED. [*Listens.*] Now — no, now — just after that measure. [*To WASH.*] 'You know you oughtn't to have been standing there — [*Gesture.*]

WASH. [*Interrupts.*] I know. I expect we'd better go over the whole thing again. [*To JACK.*] Wind her up once more, will you? [*Goes u. Stops at end of lounge; business of talking to DR. H and MRS. H.*]

[*ED. and HARD. business of showing him how and where she is to fall.*]

DOR. [*Business of watching them. Sudden thought, calls after WASH.*] Oh, somebody ought to tell Mr. LeClere!

WASH. [*Calls back.*] Just going to. [*Steps around end of screen, but continues in full view of audience, looking off R. Calls.*] We have to go over it again, Bunny. Got another shell? [*Turns down-stage; speaks over his shoulder.*] Hey? [*To others impatiently.*] I guess he can't hear. The door's blown shut. [*Comes down.*]

DOR. Maybe he's gone upstairs —

WASH. [*Interrupts.*] It doesn't make any difference about Bunny anyhow; we don't really need him —

HARD. [*Interrupts.*] Oh yes, we do! [*To JACK.*] Start the music, and then go and tell Mr. LeClere, please. [*To WASH. low voice.*] You don't want the poor fellow to feel out of it, you know.

JACK. [*Answers HARD.*] Yes, sir. [*Business with phonograph.*]

[*Business of everybody taking position again. Dance begins. JACK. watches them a moment, then goes u. Exit R. u. behind screen. Dance continues. After an instant, loud, inarticulate shout in JACKSON'S voice heard off. Dancers continue, not hearing it. MRS. H. startled movement. DR. H. turns, half-rises, turns back to speak to her, about to sit again, when enter JACK. R. u. staggering, ghastly face. MRS. H. starts up, DR. H. restrains her. She stands watching him, while he runs to*]

JACK. JACK. *business of trying vainly to speak, points off R. leans against wall, covers face with hands. Exit hastily* DR. H.; *after an instant, JACK. makes effort, follows him, trembling.* MRS. H. *starts U. goes a few steps after them; hesitates; stops, stands looking alternately off-stage, and at the dancers, undecided. Music and dancing continue all during this.]*

WASH. [*Down c., dancing to HARD.*] Now you want to get ready, old man!

HARD. All right!

[*At the same measure in the music as before, ED. sinks down. HARD. fails to catch her, though obviously making ready. He stands at a loss as before, then wheels and looks up-stage. DOR. and WASH. take attitudes as before.*]

DOR. [*Cries out accusingly to HARD.*] There! Now! Why don't you do it?

HARD. [*Confused, apologetic.*] I was waiting for him to shoot her. [*Helps ED. to rise. Music ceases.*]

ED. Franklin couldn't have understood —

WASH. More likely he didn't have another shell —

DOR. [*Fanning herself with her handkerchief.*] Do let's go and get some ice-water!

[*General movement U. DR. H. enters R. U. Business of speaking to MRS. H.*]

MRS. H. [*Movement and exclamation.*] Oh, John!

DR. H. [*With composure and authority, makes a gesture quieting her.*] Hush! [*Moves down a step. Same manner.*] Richard, I wish you'd come here a minute. You too, Tom.

[*Sudden silence. Consternation. WASH. and HARD. follow DR. H. off R. Door heard closing. Loud exclamation from WASH. and HARD. muffled by closed door. Silence. Women stand staring after men.*]

DOR. [*To ED. frightened voice.*] Something's happened!

ED. [*Stands c. motionless.*] Yes.

[*Pause. Silence. All tense attitudes, listening.*]

DOR. [*Terrified.*] Something's happened! [*Runs to*
MRS. H. [*Hysterically.*] What is it — oh, what?

MRS. H. [*Agitated.*] My dear, I — I —

ED. [*Stares at her an instant.*] It's Franklin! [*Starts*
R. U.]

MRS. H. [*Very much shaken, but collecting herself, interposes.*] Don't! [*As ED. halts and looks at her again, imploringly.*] Don't go that way, Edith! [*Same business as ED. gently attempts to put her aside.*] Listen to me! Dr. Hitchcock told me you mustn't go that way — none of us can go that way — he says we *mustn't*! Come with me — the other stairs — come to my room — [*Frantically urges ED. towards L. U.*]

ED. [*Stands still, looks at MRS. H. fixedly.*] It is Franklin!

MRS. H. [*Same business, much agitated.*] My dear, you shan't be kept from him — you shall see him presently — but not now — you can't *now* — the doctor said not — he's being taken care of — they're all taking care of him — the doctor knows what to do — he said *we* couldn't do anything — we're just women, you know — he said you were to stay with me — [*Begins to cry.*] — Come with me now — [*Same business.*]

DOR. [*Appalled.*] Oh, Mrs. Hitchcock, is it really — ? [*Pause.*] He's not — ? [*Pause.*] He didn't — ? [*Becomes more and more hysterical, almost screaming.*] He's only hurt — ? He isn't — ? [*In a panic, seizing EDITH's arm.*] Oh come, Edith, come quick!

ED. [*Same manner.*] Won't he know me?

MRS. H. [*Breaks down, sobbing.*] Oh, you poor child — you poor child!

[*Exeunt L. U. Voices heard inarticulately outside, gradually diminishing in the distance. A long pause. Stage empty. Gusts of wind; rain dashing against window-panes.*]

[*Enter hurriedly R. U. WASH. Crosses up-stage to L. U. Exit, leaving door wide open giving glimpse of hall outside. After an instant reappears with a telephone-directory. Comes down a little to table L. Stands by it, holding book under the electric lamp, business of searching for a number; finds it, gets out pencil and makes a note of it. Exit L. U. After an instant, voice heard off L.*] Hello. . . . I want long-distance, please . . . long-distance, I want to talk to New. . . . Yes . . . [*Pause.*] Hello, long-distance? I want to talk to somebody in New York City. . . . Why, this is Dr. John Hitchcock's residence — Dr. *Hitchcock*. . . . What's that? . . . Yes. . . . Oh, are you ready? The party is C. J. LeClere . . . *LeClere* . . . LeCl — [*Spelling slowly and distinctly.*] L-e-C-l-e-r-e-. . . . Did you get it? . . . C. J. — Charles J. . . . That's right! . . . The Elberon, Riverside Drive . . . *Elberon*, it's an apartment-building. . . . The *Elbe*. . . . Yes, that's right. . . . Park One-Nine-One-Three. . . . Shall I hold the line? . . . Hey? . . . Hang up? Oh, all right!

[*After an instant, re-enters; props door open with a chair; starts down. At same moment enter HARDING R. U. with raincoat and hat. Comes down.*]

HARD. [*To WASH. subdued voice.*] Did you get him?

WASH. [*Subdued voice.*] I left the call on the long-distance.

[Both down-stage. They continue speaking in subdued voices all through this scene.]

HARD. [Putting on raincoat.] The doctor's writing the telegrams.

WASH. Yes? Where're you going?

HARD. Why, I told Dr. Hitchcock I thought the quickest way to get somebody here to — to take charge of — of the — [Hesitates, obvious shrinking, looks at WASH. with meaning.]

WASH. [Quickly.] To take charge of — of everything — upstairs, you mean? [Nods.] Yes, I see.

HARD. I told him I'd take his big car and go in town and get them, and bring them right out at once. They keep those places open all night —

WASH. [Nods.] Yes, they have to be ready any time. Lord, I never could understand how anybody could choose to be an undertaker!

[Enter DOR. L. U. moving quickly and cautiously. Both men turn towards her.]

DOR. [Runs down to them. Subdued voice.] Oh, you're here! Oh, isn't it terrible?

HARD. Yes, it is terrible! [Pause.] How is Edith — [Catches himself.] — How is Mrs. LeClere?

DOR. Why, she hasn't given way at all — just sits there as still! I think she's sort of stunned. Mrs. Hitchcock's with her. I came away — I'm no good — simply no earthly good — I'm so frightened! [To WASH.] Weren't you telephoning just now?

WASH. Yes, trying to get Bunny's brother — Charley LeClere, you know.

DOR. [Answers WASH.] Oh! [To HARD.] You're not going out in this rain, Mr. Harding?

HARD. [Turns up edge of his trousers, raises collar of

raincoat, etc.] In the machine. I have to go down to the garage and get it out myself. The doctor's chauffeur has gone home.

WASH. Want help?

HARD. Oh, thank you, Tom, don't believe I do. It's a Standish, same make as my own — I guess I can manage it by myself —

DOR. [*Interrupts.*] Why, can't Jackson — ?

HARD. [*Interrupts. Emphatic.*] Jackson's all in! The doctor had to give him something! He was the first one to — to see — to see it, you know. [*Pauses. Looks down.*] The poor fellow can't get over it. [*Addresses them both.*] Do you know he says that actually the very last thing he said to Bunny was to ask him to be more careful how he pointed the revolver! Of course Jackson's only a servant — he couldn't say *much* — it wasn't *his* place —

WASH. It was luck anyhow. Bunny had got the shells all mixed up — there was a handful of both kinds in his pocket. [*To HARD.*] You know? You saw me take 'em out? He must have just happened to pick a loaded one.

DOR. I thought you couldn't tell them apart.

WASH. Oh yes, if you're a little careful. There's a difference in the weight. Anybody else would have been on their guard, especially after that scare we'd had already. But Bunny — [*Shakes head.*] Nice job explaining to the coroner!

DOR. [*Horried.*] The coroner? Do we *have* to have *him*?

HARD. Can't be helped, in a case like this, I think. [*Fumbles in his clothes.*] Got a cigar, Tom?

WASH. [*Begins to fumble in his clothes; stops, realizing*

that he is still in costume.] Pshaw — thought I had! But not in these clothes, of course! Take one of Dr. Hitchcock's, why don't you? He won't mind.

[HARD. and WASH. *business of searching on table and finding cigars and matches.*]

DOR. [*Sits L.*] Dr. Hitchcock's perfectly splendid, I think! So cool and knows exactly what to do! [*Pauses.*] Well, to be sure, a doctor's used to all kinds of awful things!

WASH. Better light that now, Dick. You'd have trouble getting it going outside. Here — [*Business of scratching match and holding it to HARDING's cigar. Lower voice.*] It seems awful, somehow, to be smoking — and talking — and all that, with poor old Bunny upstairs — ! But after all — !

HARD. [*Gravely.*] It's nothing to *him*, I expect, Tom — nothing to *him*, now! [*Going U. Turns.*] You're going to stay here, aren't you?

WASH. Sure! All night, if they need me.

HARD. Well, 'bye! [*Exit R. U.*]

[WASH. *comes down c. Stands, hands in pockets, thoughtful. A pause.*]

DOR. I *can't* understand how he did it! Do you suppose he *knew*?

WASH. [*Shakes head.*] Dr. Hitchcock says not. He says it was all over in a flash.

DOR. Well, that was a blessing, anyhow! [*Pause.*] Where was it? Where did it — you know?

WASH. [*Without speaking shows her by placing fingertip under right side of lower jaw, towards the ear.*]

DOR. [*Shudders.*] Goodness! I suppose it went right through!

WASH. [*Walks nervously up and down.*] Don't talk

about it! [*Same business.*] We carried him upstairs —
[*Breaks off. Same business.*] I hope I'll never have to
see anything like that again! [*Passes hand across fore-
head. Sits R.*]

[*A pause.*]

DOR. Well, it sounds dreadful to say it, of course,
but wasn't the whole thing just like Bunny LeClere!

[*Telephone-bell rings off L. WASH. turns, listens an
instant, rises, goes U.*]

CURTAIN

CIVILIZATION

A PLAY IN ONE ACT

CHARACTERS IN THE ORDER IN WHICH THEY APPEAR

PON, *a Chinese butler*

A MAID

JIM BELDING

JANIE [*Mrs. Jim Belding*]

MRS. MARION BLAKE KEBLER

ARCHIE HUGHES

POLLY MAXWELL

NINA KING, *a sister of Mrs. Belding*

JOHN BLACK, *ranch-foreman*

BILLY SIMCOE

TIME: the present.

SCENE: the Beldings' ranch at Miraflores, Southern California.

[*Curtain rises, discovering the patio of the BELDING ranch-house, an old mission remodeled. Arcades L. and R. with two doors U. and D. on each side. At back low parapet of weathered concrete, with large vases in classic style, filled with growing plants, at regular intervals. In the middle, opening with low, square pillars on either hand, at head of a flight of steps descending to a lower level. Beautiful distant view of mountains, etc. At C. fine old Spanish well-*

head, round, about waist-high, built of blue tiles, with arched wrought-iron frame-work with chains, pulleys, etc., for drawing water. R. U. brilliantly colored parrot on a stand, with potted plants massed about the base. L. U. telescope mounted on a tripod, and trained to command the middle landscape. R. D. wicker chaise-longue with pillows, Navajo blanket, etc., small wicker stand with smoking things, comfortable wicker arm-chairs, rockers, etc. L. D. larger table set for a meal, two or three chairs. Scattered on the floor, seats of chairs and smoking-table, magazines, papers, bridge-score pad, a chiffon scarf, etc. An armful of bright-colored flowers heaped on the curb of the well, beside them a pair of gauntlet gloves and pair of scissors.]

[Enter PON L. U. elderly Chinaman, noiseless, efficient, immaculately clean in loose white blouse and trousers, skullcap, Chinese shoes, etc. He carries a pitcher and under the other arm two or three tall glass vases. Goes to well, sets vases and pitcher down carefully alongside the flowers, draws a bucket of water and fills pitcher. Moves about, business of straightening and tidying up the place; shakes and plumps up the pillows, folds Navajo blanket neatly, picks up scarf, considers it a moment, folds it neatly, and lays it down on table. Picks up magazines, dusts off, arranges on smoking-table. Looks all around. Exit L. U. Clock heard off striking nine. Immediately afterwards a shrill, prolonged ringing as of an electric bell. Re-enter PON L. U. with dust-pan, broom and brush with which he begins to sweep up floor of enclosure. Enter L. U. maid in smart uniform, cap, etc., carrying a coffee-percolator on a

large silver tray with cups, saucers, etc., which she arranges on breakfast-table R. D. Exit L. U.]

[*Enter R. U. BELDING. Comes slowly down c. looking over bulky circular which he holds spread open in front of him with both hands, some letters crowded into one hand along with the circular. PON stops sweeping, and stands still respectfully as BELD. nears him.*]

BELD. [*Glances up, grunts abstractedly in salutation.*]
Ump, Pon! G'm'rning!

PON. [*Civil, impassive.*] Goo' molling, Missee Belding!

BELD. [*Same business, reading as he moves slowly D. C.*]
Was this all the mail that came this morning?

PON. [*Resumes sweeping as BELD. passes him.*] Yes, sir.

[*BELD. stands D. C. same business. PON comes D. R. with dust-pan and brush and begins cleaning up on hands and knees around and under chaise-longue and smoking-table. Enter MAID L. U. with covered dishes.*]

BELD. [*Glances up. Same business.*] Ump! G'm'rning!

MAID. [*Correct and quiet.*] Good-morning, sir!

BELD. [*Crosses slowly towards chaise-longue, speaking as he scans circular, fluttering the leaves.*] Just myself and Mrs. Belding for breakfast, Maggie. I think the others are all having theirs in their rooms.

MAID. Yes, sir, thank you. Madame rang for me to start the coffee, sir.

BELD. [*Reaches chaise-longue, sits on foot of it, throwing circular aside. To MAID.*] All right, start it! She'll be here in a minute. [*Begins opening letters.*]

[MAID *business of lighting alcohol lamp under percolator.*]

BELD. [*To PON, crumpling up some torn envelopes, circular, etc.*] Here, these can go into your trash. [*Movement and exclamation as PON presents dust-pan.*] Hi, what's that you've got hold of? [*Fishes out bridge-score pad, business of flipping it against lounge, blowing off dust and lint, etc.*] Where'd you find this?

PON [*Impassive.*] Him on gloun'. Allee samee tlash.

BELD. Trash? Trash nothing! It's money, Pon, [*With burlesque emphasis.*] dollars, you know — cold, hard, round, iron men! It's a bridge-score — you know that game we play? [*Makes motion of dealing cards all around, gathering up hand, sorting it, studying cards with a frown.*] Two hearts! Double! Satisfied! Hey, Pon?

PON. [*Going on cleaning up. Impassive.*] Allee li!

BELD. [*Looking over score.*] Let's see. [*Reads.*] "Hughes and Mrs. Kebler, minus sixty-two-fifty" — "B. and Mrs. B. plus — " [*Mumbles, gets out pencil and verifies figures.*] I guess that's right. Hughes was keeping score last night. He and Marion Kebler had rotten luck playing together. [*Reads.*] "Hughes, P. M." — [*Puzzled.*] P. M.? Oh yes, he means when he was playing with Polly Maxwell. They won that rubber and Marion got soaked forty or fifty again. [*Glances over score again, grimaces, shakes head, dangles score-pad between his hands, idly watching PON.*] Women haven't any business to play for money, don't you think so, Pon?

PON. [*Cleaning, impassive.*] No savvy. Chineese women no can do.

[*Enter JANIE R. U.*]

BELD. Can't, hey? I suppose if one of 'em did and lost some money, her husband could tie her up and beat her, is that it? You can't do that in a civilized country like this. [*Turns.*] Hello, Janie! [*Lays score down on table.*]

JANIE. Good-morning, Jimmie! [*Comes D. C. Nods to PON. Crosses D. L. towards table.*] Breakfast ready? [*To MAID who is standing stiffly in correct attitude.*] Very well, Maggie, that's all. Mr. Belding and I will wait on ourselves as usual. [*Sits at table.*]

MAID. Thank you, madame. [*Going.*]

[*Exit PON L. U.*]

JANIE. Oh, just a minute, Maggie. I want you to take a grape-fruit up to my sister, instead of the orange. She likes them better. [*Business of attending to coffee-machine, cups and saucers, etc.*] Had your breakfast, Jim?

BELD. Not yet. Waiting for you. [*Crosses L. to table. Sits.*]

MAID. If you please, madame, Miss King has had her breakfast.

JANIE. Oh, has she? [*Pauses. Glances towards flowers on the well-curb.*] Why, she hasn't fixed the flowers yet. [*Resumes business of moving her hands about among the dishes. Casually.*] I suppose she has gone out, Maggie?

MAID. [*Civil, expressionless.*] Yes, madame.

JANIE. [*Same business.*] Out riding with Mr. Black, perhaps?

MAID. [*Same business.*] Yes, Madame.

JANIE. [*Nods at her in dismissal.*] Very well.

[*Exit MAID L. U.*]

BELD. What's to eat? [*Business of lifting covers to look into dishes.*] Ah-ha-a! [*Exaggerated relish.*] The

delicious California egg! Ah-ha-a! The ditto California broiled bacon! The ditto, ditto toasted muffin! And here we have the California super-orange, grown on the luscious soil of our own broad acres beneath the golden California skies! [*Cuts orange with a flourish.*]

JANIE. [*Selecting orange, lazily amused.*] Glorious! Sounds just like a native son! Where did you get it?

BELD. Out of a circular that came this morning. One of these come-on ones, boosting this section, you know. We're in it. It had photographs of the house and everything. "Winter home of James Belding, Esquire, well-known member of Miraflores County's New York Colony."

[*Both of them business of eating.*]

JANIE. [*Indifferent amusement.*] Really?

BELD. Yes, and it had Henderson's, too. Spoke of him as a millionaire who makes a profitable fad of raising polo-ponies — [*Chuckles.*] *Profitable!*

JANIE. [*Laughs.*] *Profitable!*

BELD. That's what it said. Picture of old Vance in his polo-outfit.

JANIE. [*More interest.*] Oh, was there anything about *Mrs.* Vance Henderson?

BELD. No. That is, I don't think so. No photograph anyhow.

JANIE. [*Confidential.*] Do you suppose the people that got the circular up are *on*?

BELD. *On*? You mean about Vance and Laura? I want a little more cream, please. Why, I don't know. I don't think it would make much difference out here, anyhow. Everything goes in California. Besides, they're married *now* whatever they were before, so it's all square, isn't it?

JANIE. [*Emphatic.*] No, it *isn't* all square, Jim, and you know it.

BELD. [*Argumentative.*] Well now, why not? Of course she went off with Henderson without waiting to get a divorce from Number One —

JANIE. [*Interrupting.*] Number One?

BELD. I mean Van Dyke, her first husband, you know. Laura goes off with Vance Henderson without stopping for anything, and of course that's a foolish thing to do. But the minute Van Dyke divorces her, why, Vance and she get married. They can't do any more than that, can they? They're just as respectable as lots of people we know, married — [*Sips coffee.*] — or single — [*Sips.*] — or *mixed!*

JANIE. Oh, don't say *respectable*, Jim, it sounds so *common*. You might say respectable of a scrubwoman or janitor or somebody like that, but not about people we *know*. You can't call people in society *respectable*.

BELD. [*Rises.*] Well, that's just what the Hendersons are. [*Crosses R. D. business of selecting cigarette from smoking-table.*] The other day when Hughes and I rode over there to look at the ponies we both noticed it. They looked bored to death. [*Sits R. smoking.*] Hughes thought it was funny, but — [*Shakes head. Thoughtful.*] — I don't know — I can't help feeling sorry for 'em, somehow. They must be confoundedly lonesome.

JANIE. [*Pointedly.*] Well, do you want me to go and call on Laura, and have them over here?

BELD. [*Abrupt movement, frowning.*] No, of course not!

JANIE [*Shrugs.*] Oh!

BELD. It's all right for Archie Hughes or myself,

we're *men*, but — [*Breaks off, frowning*] — here's your sister, Nina, in the house, and Polly Maxwell —

JANIE. [*Cool, ironical, amused.*] Why, the Hendersons are all *square*, aren't they?

BELD. [*Grunt of impatience.*] Oh! [*Looks at her, suddenly begins to laugh.*] Lord, Janie, what a queer set of conventions we all live by! When you get right down to it, aren't we funny, though?

JANIE. [*Reasonably.*] I don't see anything particularly funny about it. There are some things you *can* do, and there are some things you *can't* do, and there's no sense in people thinking they can be different from everybody else. It's silly to try to be different.

BELD. [*Smoking. Meditative.*] I daresay you're right. [*Pause.*] Sometimes I think we aren't really civilized at all, only sophisticated. Look at your friend Mrs. Kebler — [*Sarcastic emphasis.*] — Mrs. Marion Kebler of New York and more recently of Reno —

JANIE. [*Interrupting, anxious.*] Sh-h! She might hear you. [*Rises. Moves L. D. and stands with finger on electric button. Bell rings distantly.*]

BELD. [*Continuing.*] She's just about in the same boat with the Hendersons — she and Archie Hughes —

JANIE. [*Interrupting.*] Do be careful!

BELD. Why, everybody knows about her and Arch.

JANIE. But nothing's ever *come out*. It's not the same at all.

BELD. That's just the point I'm making. Nobody'll have anything to do with the Hendersons, but here are Marion and Hughes staying in our house, and everybody knows why she got her divorce, and everybody knows Archie isn't out here to buy polo-ponies

at all, but just so they can be together, but it's all right, because nothing's ever *come out*, and so — oh — er — ahem — ! [*Halts suddenly as JANIE makes a warning gesture.*]

[*Enter MAID L. U. BELD. and JANIE silently watch her gather up tray of breakfast-things and exit L. U.*]

JANIE. [*Crosses L. D. picks up magazine.*] You ought to be more careful. [*Business of glancing through magazine.*]

BELD. [*Shrugs. Grins.*] That's another point! Hughes and Mrs. K. know perfectly well that everybody is talking about them. The whole business is just as much of a game as auction. You can't play if you don't mind the rules!

JANIE. [*With interest, throwing down magazine.*] Oh, how did we come out last night?

BELD. [*Hands her the score.*] I just rescued this from the waste-basket. Polly's ahead. Marion seems to have given the party. She owes nearly all of it.

JANIE. [*Looks it over.*] She lost almost every time! [*Lays score down on table.*]

BELD. She can't play a little bit, anyhow.

JANIE. We ought to have enough people here for another table. You and I can't play against each other; it's just taking the money out of one pocket and putting it in the other, and we don't want to play together all the time. [*Considers.*] I wonder who we could ask — somebody that can *play*, of course.

BELD. Well, why doesn't Nina ever come into the game?

JANIE. [*Significantly.*] Yes, why doesn't she? [*Sits L. C. D. A pause, during which she looks at him and he at her, JANIE with meaning, BELD. puzzled.*] That's

one reason why I'd like to have a little bigger house-party — more *men*, anyhow.

BELD. [*Same business.*] Hey?

JANIE. [*Incredulous.*] Why, haven't you *noticed*?

BELD. [*Same business.*] Hey?

JANIE. Everybody else has.

BELD. [*Gazes blankly at her, shaking his head.*]

JANIE. Even the servants. I could tell from Maggie's manner just now when I asked her if my sister had gone out riding with Mr. Black.

BELD. [*Loud.*] *Black!*

JANIE. Sh-h!

BELD. [*Enlightened.*] Black and Nina! *Oh!*

JANIE. Sh-h!

[*A slight pause.*]

BELD. Well, he's a very good-looking young fellow — picturesque — makes you think of The Virginian and all that, you know. That style is something new to Nina. It's natural enough.

JANIE. [*Impatient.*] Oh, *natural!* As if people could be *natural!* Why, you know we can't let it go on, Jim. It's not to be thought of for one minute. A ranch-foreman! Why, what would people say? What — ?

BELD. [*Interrupting.*] Sh-h! Don't get so excited! I see — I understand. Of course it's got to be stopped somehow. But maybe it hasn't gone so far as you are afraid. Maybe they're both — *you* know? Like any pretty girl and young man? It's just as I say, they wouldn't be human if they didn't start something. It doesn't have to be serious with either one of them.

JANIE. [*Positive.*] Jim, this is *dead earnest*. I know all about Nina — my own sister!

BELD. Why, has she told you — ?

JANIE. [*Interrupting, impatient gesture.*] No, of course she wouldn't tell *me* anything — my own sister! But she talks about his being a MAN all the time —

BELD. [*Involuntary laugh.*] Well, he *is* a man all the time, isn't he?

JANIE. Oh, you know what I mean. When girls talk about a MAN in that strain — !

BELD. Well — ! [*Rises, walks about, hands in pockets, frowning.*]

JANIE. [*Suggestively.*] Send him away?

BELD. [*Ironic.*] Yes. Next day Nina'd go off and meet him somewhere, and they'd get married right off the reel! [*Shakes head with a negative grunt.*] Hump! We're got to think up something better than that, Janie. [*Continues to walk about, same business.*]

JANIE. Now you see why it would be a good thing to get some more people here. Nina and he wouldn't have so many *opportunities* anyhow.

BELD. No, but if anybody says anything to her about it, or if we show that we're trying to keep her out of it, why — [*Gesture*] — it's all off! She'll marry him *sure!*

JANIE. Oh, I've pretended all along to be perfectly unconscious that anything was going on — [*Abrupt change of face, voice and manner.*] Why, Marion!

[*Enter MRS. KEBLER R. D.*]

MRS. K. [*Gaily.*] Good-morning, host and hostess! [*Looks all around.*] Nobody else here? This air is so lovely it's outrageous the way we all sleep.

JANIE. You've had something to eat? [*Goes u. c. begins to sort flowers.*]

MRS. K. Oh, yes! Perfectly luscious breakfast! Waffles and honey — I adore waffles and honey, don't

you? And a great big bunch of red roses on the tray. I adore red roses! [*Sits R. D.*] I'm going to take one of your cigarettes, Mr. Belding. [*Takes it. Business of looking for match on smoking-table, comes across bridge-score.*] Oo-ooh, here's that awful score from last night! *Everybody* was minus! [*Drops it carelessly on match-tray.*] I never saw such hands! [*Lights cigarette and drops burning match-end carelessly on tray.*]

BELD. [*Makes movement, then controls it.*] Er — look out! That is — [*Stops; grins; sits deliberately L. D. watching her.*]

MRS. K. Eh? [*Leans back luxuriously in chair, blowing out a cloud of smoke.*] Those roses were simply gorgeous. But everything is like that out here — so luxuriant — so *free*, you know!

[*Bridge-score burning.*]

BELD. [*Drily, watching it.*] Yes, very free!

MRS. K. It seems to be in the *air*, somehow.

BELD. Yes, looks that way.

MRS. K. [*Slight scream.*] Oh, *do* look what I've done! Well, it's lucky I didn't set anything else on fire — anything *valuable*. But isn't that too bad? Does anybody remember where anybody was?

JANIE. Polly was ahead, I believe.

MRS. K. Oh, *isn't* that a shame? Well, I suppose we'll just have to let it go. And Polly's the one that needs it most. She simply can't *afford* to lose.

BELD. Nobody's particularly keen on losing.

MRS. K. No, of course not. [*Innocently.*] I wonder where *I* came out. Did you notice?

BELD. [*Rises. Looks at watch.*] I know where *I* ought to be this minute. Watching them spray the oranges. [*Goes U.*]

MRS. K. Spray the oranges? How interesting!

JANIE. No, it isn't, it's an awful bore. But Jim thinks he has to be a farmer here, you know.

[Enter HUGHES at steps U. C. coming up just as BELDING starts down. Both speak at once.]

HUGHES. 'Lo, Jimmie!

BELD. Hey, Arch!

[At sound of HUGHES' voice, MRS. K. rises and turns eagerly in that direction, making little nervous movements about her hair, dress, etc. BELD. going down steps, voice heard at gradually increasing distance. HUGHES appears at top of steps, turning to shout after him. Enter POLLY R. D.]

HUGHES. [Calling to BELD.] Just starting out?

BELD. [Calling back.] Yep. Coming along?

HUGHES. [Same business.] Not this morning, thanks — [Turns, sees MRS. K. Retreats impulsively. Calling after BELD.] Wait, Jim!

BELD. [Off stage.] Hey? Coming?

HUGHES. [Hesitating.] Yes — no!
That is, after a while. Never mind!

BELD. [At a distance.] All right!

POLLY. [D. R. waves hand to JANIE.]
Hoo-hoo, Jane!

JANIE. Well, Poll!

HUGHES. [Strolls D. C. to well-head.] Mrs. Belding, you look fit as ever this morning. Did you say Polly? How is my friend Poll to-day? [Goes L. U. to parrot's stand, with the effect of avoiding seeing MRS. K.] Polly want some salad? [Picks leaf from one of the plants and offers it to the bird.] Don't eat salad for breakfast, eh? Here, now, none of that! [Withdraws hand quickly.] Don't bite, you brute, that isn't

} All this beginning with
HUGHES' entrance, so rapidly as to be almost simultaneous.

funny! [*Business of playing with parrot, back towards Mrs. K.*]

JANIE. [*At c. Business with flowers. Carelessly.*] Here's the other Polly, Mr. Hughes.

HUGHES. [*Turns.*] Miss Maxwell!

POLLY. [*Cool.*] Tut, tut! Double-tut, that is! Don't disturb him! Oh, let me have that rose, Janie, it just matches. [*Runs u. c. to JANIE, business of taking rose and fastening it in her dress.*]

JANIE. As a thoughtful housewife, I am now going to inquire for the final time, has everybody had his breakfast?

POLLY. Last call! Dining-car to the rear! *I have.*

MRS. K. [*Goes r. u. towards HUGHES.*] Mercy, Janie, we're all perfectly stuffed.

HUGHES. [*Loud and a little rough.*] Look out, Mrs. Kebler! Don't come too near!

[*MRS. K. halts abruptly, stands and stares at him.*]

HUGHES. [*Less rough. Explanatory.*] It's such a tricky beast. All parrots are, you know. Might reach out and nip you suddenly.

MRS. K. [*Same business.*] Oh!

[*During the above, POLLY at JANIE'S side, gives her a nudge. They exchange glances.*]

[*HUGHES crosses l. u. sauntering, business of looking through telescope, adjusting it in different positions. MRS. K. watches him for an instant, comes d. c. picks up magazine, affects to look through it.*]

POLLY. [*Sits on well-curb.*] How do you happen to be fixing the flowers, Janie? I thought Nina always did it.

JANIE. [*Carefully careless.*] Oh, not always. She's out on the ranch somewhere this morning — [*Breaks off abruptly.*] — What is it?

[Enter PON L. U.]

PON. You go talkee phone one time soon, please?

HUGHES. [*At telescope, peering through it. Ejaculates.*]
Huh!

[POLLY turns to look at him.]

JANIE. [*To PON.*] Somebody wants me at the telephone? Who is it?

PON. Guess maybe so Santa Clistina.

JANIE. Santa Christina ranch — the Hendersons'!
[*Hesitates.*] Oh, well! [*Going, glances around at others.*]
Just a minute! I'll be back.

[*Exit JANIE, followed by PON.*]

POLLY. [*To HUGHES, after an instant of observing him as he continues absorbed in looking through the telescope.*] What are you looking at, Mr. Hughes? What did you see when you shouted out that way just now?

HUGHES. [*Dropping telescope, pretence of indifference.*]
Me? Why, nothing. Did I shout out?

POLLY. [*Briskly, jumps down from well-curb.*] Double-tut! You know you saw something. Here, let me — !
[*Seizes telescope.*]

[*HUGHES stands aside grinning, L. U. C. MRS. K. turns interested. POLLY business of shifting telescope about, and looking through it.*]

POLLY. Bother, I can't make out anything. I know there was something — [*Same business.*]

MRS. K. [*Goes U. C. Languid curiosity.*] What's the excitement?

HUGHES. [*To POLLY.*] Train it farther down the valley — no, to your right —

POLLY. [*Interrupts, ejaculation.*] Oh! [*Gazes intently through telescope.*]

MRS. K. [*Languidly satirical.*] This is the most intense situation.

POLLY. [*At telescope.*] He's holding her hand — no, he isn't either! He was just leaning over with his hand on her horse's neck. Now he's taken it away.

HUGHES. [*Lounging against balustrade.*] Piker!

POLLY. [*Jumps back with an exclamation, letting go of telescope.*] Good gracious! [*To the others, beginning to laugh, discomfited.*] They both looked straight up here, and Nina pointed with her whip right at me!

MRS. K. [*Taking telescope.*] Nina! [*Business of looking through telescope, and finding the proper direction.*]

HUGHES. [*To POLLY.*] Why, they haven't any telescope. They couldn't see anybody at this distance.

POLLY. No — I know — of course they couldn't. But they seemed so near — it gave me such a funny feeling.

MRS. K. [*At telescope.*] Oh, I see them now!

POLLY. [*To HUGHES, eagerly.*] What were they doing when you first saw them?

HUGHES. Why, Black had got down to fix her stirrup, and she put out her hand and dusted something off of his shoulder — like this — [*Illustrates on her shoulder.*]

POLLY. [*Alert.*] Well? Then what happened?

HUGHES. Nothing. He got back on his horse again.

POLLY. [*Disappointed.*] He certainly is the slowest!

MRS. K. [*Relinquishes telescope.*] It's all over —

HUGHES } [*Both at once, loud, excited.*] What? Is

POLLY } he — ? Did she — ? Are they — ?

MRS. K. [*Amused.*] Calm yourselves! I only meant that it's all over for the present anyhow. They've ridden in among the trees, and you can't see any more.

HUGHES. [*Humorously pessimistic.*] It looks as if

they'd never pull it off at this rate. Well — ! [*Shrugs. Takes out cigar.*]

MRS. K. Yes, I don't see what Janie Belding is so worried about. [*Moves nearer him.*]

POLLY. I should think you men would take a hint and wear the same kind of clothes Mr. Black does. They're so picturesque.

HUGHES. [*Cool. Smoking.*] Thanks. The costume would be a scream on Broadway, wouldn't it?

MRS. K. [*Moving nearer.*] Oh, Polly meant for you to wear it only while you're here, you know. [*Takes hold of his watch-chain.*]

HUGHES. [*Twitches the chain out of her hand, backing away, frowning, annoyed.*] Oh — er — pardon me, that smoke went right into your face! [*Gets over to balustrade R. U. and sits on it.*]

[*MRS. K. stands looking at him while he deliberately looks away from her. POLLY U. C. glances from one of them to the other. MRS. K. suddenly turns her back on both of them and comes down L. C. Stands, back to stage, looking down.*]

[*Enter JANIE L. U. hurriedly.*]

JANIE. Oh, what do you think — ?

[*General movement.*]

JANIE. Billy Simcoe's here!

HUGHES. You don't say!

POLLY. He *said* he was coming, but he didn't know when.

MRS. K. [*Indifferently.*] Oh, Billy Simcoe!

JANIE. He just telephoned and asked if he could come over to luncheon.

POLLY. Come over? Come over from where? Where is he?

JANIE. [*Faintly embarrassed.*] Why — ah — it seems he's stopping at the Hendersons'.

[*A slight pause.*]

POLLY. [*Blankly.*] Oh!

JANIE. [*Looking around, half apologetic.*] Well, what was I to do? He wanted to come to luncheon, and I couldn't very well —

MRS. K. [*Iceily.*] Did Mr. and Mrs. Henderson invite themselves to luncheon, too?

JANIE. [*Expostulating.*] Oh, you *know* they wouldn't do *that*, Marion!

HUGHES. No, Vance wasn't born yesterday — nor Mrs. H. either! But I'm curious to know what Billy said about them.

JANIE. He didn't say anything — just barely mentioned them. But he said he would be there two weeks.

POLLY. Anyhow, we'll have another person for bridge now. Didn't you say it only took about ten minutes to motor over from their place? We can call him up any time — [*Stops short.*] — that is —

MRS. K. Rather awkward if *Mr.* or *Mrs.* happened to answer the telephone, don't you think?

POLLY. Oh, one of the men could do the calling up. [*To HUGHES.*] You wouldn't mind, would you?

HUGHES. Lord, no! I'm incorruptible.

JANIE. Well, I think I'll have to interview Pon — [*Going L. D.*] — You can all take care of yourselves? Everybody do just what he wants to — you know that's our motto.

POLLY. [*Hastily, running down L. after her.*] Oh, wait a minute, Jane. Let me go with you — [*Seizes JANIE's arm, and with her back to the others, makes a grimace; nudges JANIE violently.*] I want to see the garden.

JANIE. [*Not immediately understanding.*] But I'm not going to the gard — [*Halts abruptly as she catches the other's expression.*]

POLLY. [*With emphasis, pushing her through the door.*] I love the garden, it's so pretty — [*Both talking, exeunt L. D.*]

[*A pause.* HUGHES sitting on balustrade, smoking. MRS. K. at c. by the well, restlessly playing with the flowers.]

HUGHES. [*Carefully conventional manner.*] Nice place the Beldings have here.

MRS. K. [*Enthusiastic.*] Isn't it? I'd love to have one just like it, wouldn't you? One feels so far away from — oh, *people*, and — and the world, you know, and all that! There must be places for sale in the neighborhood.

HUGHES. [*Cold.*] It costs wads of the stuff to run it — you have to remember that. Belding can afford it — let's *hope* he can afford it, anyhow. I couldn't — [*Corrects himself precipitately.*] — Most people couldn't. And I don't know about it's being "so far away from people." You never know when you're going to run into the Hendersons.

[*A pause.*]

MRS. K. [*Timidly.*] Wouldn't you like this rose in your coat? [*Going towards him, halts as he gets up with an impatient movement. An instant while they stand looking at each other. She speaks in a changed voice.*] Oh, very well, if you don't care for it! [*Throws flower down.*]

HUGHES. [*Uneasy, a little ashamed.*] Everybody would know you stuck it on me, you know, and — and —

MRS. K. [*Savage.*] Well?

HUGHES. Well — [*Hesitates, then bursts out.*] See here, Marion, you oughtn't to do that sort of thing, you know — I mean take hold of me — my watch-chain and all that — in front of people. It — it doesn't look well — it — oh, confound it, you know what I mean!

MRS. K. You — you didn't use to mind — [*Voice breaks; turns away from him, back to audience.*]

HUGHES. [*Annoyed.*] Oh, that was different — that is — [*Glances at her; throws away cigar, gets down from balustrade, moves about uneasily.*] Oh now, be reasonable! You can see for yourself — [*Pauses near her, irresolutely.*]

MRS. K. I ought to see, I suppose. You're making it plain enough.

HUGHES. [*Half relieved, half uneasy, with affected heartiness.*] Well then, that's all right! Let's talk about something else! [*Stoops and picks up rose, smells it, twirls it about, tries to fasten it in his button-hole; speaks with the same attempt at natural manner.*] Fix this, won't you?

[*MRS. K. hesitates an instant, then goes up to him and fastens the flower in his coat. As she draws back, HUGHES takes hold of her hand.*]

HUGHES. [*Same manner.*] There now, it's all right, isn't it? Come on and sit down over here. [*Goes L. D. pulls a chair forward for her; business of beginning to rummage on smoking-stand.*] Hello, what's become of that score — from last night, you know? I thought I put it right here. [*Continues search.*] Thunder! Where do you suppose — ? Maybe Belding took it and put it away. I told him I'd settle up this morning — [*Same business.*]

MRS. K. [*Sits L. D.*] Never mind! I got rid of it.

HUGHES. [*Straightens up; turns towards her.*] You got rid of it?

MRS. K. [*Innocent assurance.*] Yes, I burned it up — [*Movement from HUGHES. She halts, a little startled.*]

HUGHES. You burned — ?

MRS. K. [*Quickly.*] Accidentally — that is, of course I made it seem as if it was accidental. I just dropped my cigarette on it. Jim Belding saw me, but he didn't suspect anything.

HUGHES. Didn't suspect anything! [*Gives a kind of inarticulate snarl.*] Ungh! [*Walks to and fro, down-stage, hands in pockets, looking down scowling.*]

MRS. K. [*Lowering voice.*] I wasn't going to let you pay for me again. It was an awful lot I lost. And really and truly, Arch, you were 'way behind the game yourself —

HUGHES. [*Same business, interrupting her with another snarl.*] Ungh! I don't know what possessed you — I can't imagine — [*Same business while she watches him, puzzled and frightened.*] Why, don't you know — ? Can't you understand — ? [*Same business, stops in front of her, despairing gesture, another snarl.*] Ungh! Oh, what's the use? [*Resumes pacing.*]

MRS. K. [*Rises impatiently. Sharp and loud.*] What is the use, to be sure? If you're so keen about it, for Heaven's sake pretend that you remember what you owed, and pay everybody —

[*Hoofs heard off.*]

HUGHES [*Interrupting her with another snarl as before.*] Ungh!

[*Voices and laughter heard off.*]

MRS. K. [*Louder and sharper.*] I don't mean for you to pay my part, thank you —

NINA [*Off. Gay hail.*] What ho, the house!

HUGHES. [*Interrupting MRS. K. with gesture.*] Sh-h!

MRS. K. [*Not heeding him.*] If you think you —

HUGHES. [*Same business.*] Hush! Do please —!

[*Both turn, facing up-stage.*]

[*Enter NINA c. running up steps, followed by BLACK.*]

NINA. [*Mock military salute with her crop, very erect, clicking her heels together. Burst of laughter.*] Well, are you up for all day at last? [*Turns to BLACK, pointing to the others with crop.*] Moving-picture of the toiling masses, Mr. Black!

MRS. K. [*Collecting herself with a slight effort.*] You look ever so much like a toiler yourself, Nina!

NINA. Why, I *am* one. I've been up since seven o'clock this morning, riding all over the place. [*Sits on well-curb c. pulling off gloves.*] Perfectly heavenly day!

HUGHES. [*Collecting himself, but much more confused than Mrs. K.*] Is it? I mean, *isn't* it! Beautiful! Believe I'll go for a stroll myself. [*Goes u. c. striding rapidly.*]

BLACK. [*At top of steps. L. Naïve surprise.*] Are you in a hurry, Mr. Hughes? Hadn't you better take a hoss?

HUGHES. [*Going. Losing temper.*] Oh, confound it, no! [*Recollecting himself.*] That is, thanks you know, but I'd rather not — I — er — I — [*Exit c. abruptly.*]

[*BLACK looks after him. Wheels slowly to look again at NINA.*]

NINA. [*Same attitude. Carelessly, not turning her head.*] Bye-bye, see you at luncheon, I suppose. Oh, the poor neglected flowers! [*Begins to gather them up and arrange them, clipping off leaves, etc. Hums opening*

bars of *Flower-Song* from *Faust*.] Tra, la, la, la-la-la! tra-la, tra-la!

MRS. K. [*Crossing R. D.*] I — I really ought to go and write some letters — [*Exit R. D.*]

NINA. [*Indifferent, not turning her head.*] Ah? [*Same business humming.*] Tra, la, la, la — [*Selects flower and holds it off, regarding it critically, head on one side.*] Tra-la, tra-la!

BLACK. [*Reluctantly, eyes on her.*] Well, I guess I'd better be getting along, too.

NINA. [*Complete change of manner; quickly and anxiously.*] Oh, don't! That is, wait a minute — I've just picked out this flower for you — [*Jumps down and goes towards him.*] — You don't have to go now, do you?

BLACK. [*Incoherent.*] No — yes — I hadn't ought — [*Voice dies in his throat as she goes up to him, and begins to adjust flower.*]

NINA. [*Patting the flower into place.*] There! That's for giving me such a beautiful time this morning. [*Same business.*] We do have such good times — [*Looks up, meets his eyes, steps back abruptly; with an effort, attempting natural manner.*] — don't we, Mr. Black? I enjoy riding so much. [*Sits on well-curb as before, mechanically handling flowers.*]

BLACK. [*Makes a movement towards her which he immediately controls, clenching his fists. Recovering with an effort, stands L. U. C. folded arms, looking at her.*] I guess it's some different from any riding you've ever done back East.

NINA. It is different. It's ten thousand times better. At home everything like that seems to be just play — just a kind of sham sport — but here it's the real thing somehow, you see — ? [*Pauses, eyeing him expectantly.*]

BLACK. [*Considers.*] Well, it's sure-enough business with us. Without you ride you can't get nowhere.

NINA. [*Eagerly.*] That's just it — it's so *natural*, somehow. And do you know it seems to me as if that — [*Hesitates.*] — that same thing — that same spirit runs through everything here. It's all so — so — [*Makes a gesture.*] — so *real* and simple and everybody *himself*. You're yourself, you know — [*Halts, confused. Their eyes meet. NINA turns away quickly; same business with flowers; she laughs nervously.*] And I'm sure I'm more *myself* than I've ever been before in my life.

BLACK. [*Moving nearer.*] Do you like it?

NINA. [*Nervous.*] Like what?

BLACK. That what you was talking about — the way things is here?

NINA. [*Looking down, aimlessly shifting flowers about. Low voice.*] You know I like it.

BLACK. [*At her side.*] I expect you'd get tired of it after a little.

NINA. [*Glances at him, looks away hurriedly.*] No. No, I wouldn't. What makes you think that?

BLACK. You ain't been brought up to — [*Stops. Hesitates.*] — to living like I do — like we do — *real* living on a *real* ranch. [*Tenderly.*] I don't know how you'd make out, you're so little and — and soft-like.

NINA. Oh no, I'm not — I'm nothing wonderful. I'd get along just like everybody else — [*Suddenly jumps down from well-curb with a rather panic-struck air. Moves off from him, looking away.*]

[*Slight pause.*]

BLACK. [*Standing still, in same position, steadily.*] You don't need to get away from me like that.

[*NINA starts and turns towards him.*]

BLACK. I wouldn't lay a finger on you without you chose. I don't know how the men you been used to do, but I think too much of you — [*Stops, as she makes an involuntary movement towards him.*]

[*Enter BELDING, coming up steps leisurely fashion, unseen by either of them. He pauses at top of steps, and deliberately surveys them.*]

NINA. [*A little wildly, holding out both hands to BLACK.*] Oh, you are so — I can't help — ! [*Sobs. Covers her face with her hands, drooping towards his shoulder. BLACK makes a movement to take her in his arms.*]

BELD. [*Kicking the top step violently. Loud, vexed voice.*] Confound it!

[*NINA and BLACK start apart, turning towards rear of stage, see BELDING.*]

BELD. [*Bends down, examining shoe, straightens up, affects to see them for the first time. Loud and jolly.*] Hello, there! [*Comes down c.*]

[*BLACK L. C. startled and silent.*]

NINA. [*R. C. With forced carelessness.*] Hello, Jimmie!

BELD. Nice ride?

NINA. [*Same business.*] Oh, lovely!

BELD. [*Throws down hat, sits R. C. D.*] Did you know Billy Simcoe's here, Nina?

NINA. [*Surprised.*] No! Here? Here at the house, you mean? When did he come? Is he going to stay any time? How — ?

BELD. [*Gesture. Interrupting.*] Hold up! I can't answer fourteen questions at once. As a matter of fact, I can't even answer *one*. I don't know anything about it except what Hughes told me. I ran into Arch just now wandering about by himself for once, and —

NINA [*Interrupting.*] Oh, I know —

[BELD. *without speaking, looks at her in sudden inquiry.*]

NINA [*Explanatory.*] He and Marion were having an awful fight, and we came in on them right in the middle of it!

BELD. [*A little taken aback, glancing at BLACK.*] Oh, come now —

NINA [*Assuringly.*] Oh yes, Jimmie, *anybody* would have known.

BELD. Well anyhow — [*Hesitates an instant, evidently anxious to change the subject.*] — to get back to Billy, it seems he telephoned Janie while I was out. He's over at the Hendersons' —

NINA [*Slight change of expression and voice.*] Oh, the Hendersons!

BELD. He's coming over to lunch with us.

NINA. Lunch? I'll have to go and change. My hair's all coming down anyway. [*Moves nonchalantly*
R. D. *At arcade turns, looks at BLACK. A pause while they look at each other.* BELD. D. C. *after a lightning glance at them, stares straight ahead of him, business of lighting cigarette.*]

NINA [*Puts up her hand to her throat; in an unnatural fluttering voice.*] Good — good-morning, Mr. Black. [*Pauses, tries vainly to steady herself.*] Thank you so much for — for my ride, you know — [*Exit lingeringly*
R. D.]

[*Pause.*]

BLACK. [*Comes D. C. Gravely.*] I want to speak to you about something, Mr. Belding.

[*Enter L. U. POLLY, walking slowly with a plate on which is a grape-fruit cut in halves. She pauses, leaving*

door open, business of digging out a bite with a spoon and tasting it.]

BELD. [*Head turned away from BLACK, makes a grimace, draws his breath with the effect of bracing himself. Resigned.*] All right, Black. Go ahead. What is it?

BLACK. [*Shy but straightforward.*] It's — it's about myself and — and Miss King —

POLLY. [*L. U. turning to call through open door.*] Never mind the sugar, Pon! It's as nice as can be without. [*Door closes.*]

[*Both men turn. BELD. rises.*]

POLLY [*Sees them, nods with mouth full; comes D. C. Swallows.*] Grand grape-fruit! [*Takes mouthful. Swallows.*] Melts in your mouth. [*Takes mouthful. Speaks through it, gesture with spoon.*] Chair, please? Hands full. [*Stands D. C. between them, plate in one hand, spoon in the other, mouth full.*]

[BELD. places chair for her.]

POLLY. [*Sits, same business.*] Thanks!

BELD. [*To BLACK, over her head.*] Er — another time, Black — any time —

POLLY. [*Looks up. Eating, same business.*] Busy? In the way? [*Makes motion to rise.*]

BELD. [*Stopping her with a gesture.*] No, no! That's all right.

BLACK. [*To BELD.*] When can I see you then?

BELD. [*Flustered.*] Why — I don't know — an hour or so — I'll be right here — er — ah —

[BLACK looks at him. Exit C.]

BELD. [*Deep breath.*] Whew! [*Drops down in chair R. C. D.*]

POLLY. [*Eating.*] Hot?

BELD. No. [*Rubs back of head. Rubs chin, frowning.*]

POLLY. [*Eating.*] Why, what's the matter, then?

BELD. [*Same business.*] Nothing — that is — oh, nothing!

POLLY. [*Eating.*] I hope there isn't going to be any what-you-may-call-'em on these heavenly grape-fruit. Blight or scales, you know — ?

BELD. Hey? Oh no, the fruit's in good shape. [*Rises, walks about R. D. hands in pockets, considering.*]

POLLY. [*Finishes grape-fruit, sets plate on smoking-table, holds her hands in front of her, fingers spread apart, wipes them on handkerchief.*] It would be a perfect shame if they got spoiled. I haven't tasted any that were so good since we all took that West Indies trip last winter, don't you remember?

BELD. [*Absently.*] Hey? Oh yes, that time in Havana, you mean. [*Sits R. C. D. still preoccupied.*]

POLLY. [*Reminiscently.*] That was the *nicest* party — everybody so congenial. I thought Havana was lots of fun, didn't you? [*Pauses. Sudden laugh.*] Will you ever forget that purser?

BELD. [*Vaguely.*] The purser? On our steamer, you mean?

POLLY. Yes. Don't you remember what a perfectly stunning creature he was in his uniform on board ship? I was crazy about him.

BELD. [*Rouses himself, makes a civil effort to listen.*] Yes, we all began to think about cabling to your father. It looked as if something might happen.

POLLY. Well, you know I really was desperately taken with him, but the minute I saw him in his shore-going clothes — ! [*Makes a gesture, head turned away.*] It was all off!

BELD. [*Beginning to be interested.*] Really?

POLLY. Isn't it funny what a difference clothes make? In his uniform that purser was simply a young Greek god. And dressed like anybody else he looked like a plumber's apprentice on Sunday! Of course, he must have had on a cheap, ready-made suit —

BELD. [*Rises suddenly.*] By George!

POLLY. [*Continuing without noticing him.*] All of you men nearly died over his tie — one of those four-in-hands that come all fixed, with a clip behind the bow, so you can stick them onto your collar-button —

BELD. [*Interrupting. Laughs.*] Yes, that's so! I'd forgotten all about him.

POLLY. [*Laughs.*] Wasn't he a sight?

BELD. It cured you, hey?

POLLY. [*Laughs.*] It did! I had a serious case, too — [*Bell rings distantly.*]

BELD. [*With curiosity.*] There must have been something about him besides *clothes*, though, that disillusioned you.

POLLY. [*Shakes head, smiling.*] No. I just all at once came to my senses, and realized he wasn't our kind. I know that any girl in our set would have felt just as I did.

BELD. [*With interest.*] You think so?

POLLY. Oh, I *know* so! I remember thinking: "Suppose he eats with his knife!" He looked as if he did, you know. Wasn't it tragic?

[*Both burst out laughing.*]

[*Enter L. U. SIMCOE, in motor-coat, cap, goggles, etc., ushered in by PON. He stands a moment, pushing up goggles, looking around. Loud, cheerful voice.*] What's the joke?

[BELD. and POLLY turn around with a start. See him standing grinning at them. Both speak at once.]

POLLY. Mr. Simcoe! } [Go up. Business of
BELD. Why, here's Billy! } hearty greetings.]

[All up-stage c. gradually coming down as they talk. PON helping SIMCOE take off gloves, coat, etc. Rapid fire of questions from BELD. and POLLY, SIMCOE answering both.]

BELD. Anybody with you — ?

POLLY. Just got here — ?

SIM. [To BELD.] No, drove myself over in Henderson's car. [To POLLY.] By the Santa Fé this morning. [To BELD.] Vance told me how to get here. [Business of looking himself over.] I seem to have a good deal of California sticking to me. You've got some dust in Miraflores County.

BELD. It never rains this time of year. We didn't know you were coming —

SIM. [Interrupting.] Why, I'm not taking you by surprise, am I? I talked to Mrs. Belding —

BELD. [Interrupting.] Oh, that's all right. Only Janie doesn't know you're here yet. [To PON as the latter is moving off with SIMCOE's motor-coat, etc.] You go and tell Mrs. Belding and Miss King that this gentleman has got here, will you, and then I want you to — [Goes up R. with PON, business of giving him directions.]

SIM. [L. C. D. to POLLY, gesticulating with thumb over his shoulder towards PON.] Great old heathen, isn't he? He's the finest piece of scenery I've come to, so far. [Stands D. C. back to audience, looking around.] But I say, isn't this a corking place? Beats the Henderson's bungalow hands down!

POLLY. [L. D. *leaning on chair-back.*] Why, what's theirs like?

SIM. [Surprised.] Haven't you seen it? [Sudden comprehension.] Oh! Er — why, it's just an ordinary house, you know — er — ah —

[*Very slight pause.*]

POLLY. [Precipitately.] Everybody well at home?

SIM. Yes, when I left —

[*Business of talking together.*]

PON [Going R. U.] All li'! [Exit.]

BELD. [Coming down R. c.] The rest of them will be here directly — the ladies, that is — I don't know where Arch has gone. Smoke?

[*Business with cigars.* BELD. *lounges in chair c.*

SIM. *lounges in chaise-longue R.* POLLY *at table L.*]

SIM. Arch? Arch Hughes? Is he here?

POLLY. [Significantly.] Why not? Isn't Marion Kebler here?

SIM. [Laugh.] Sure enough! How soon is it to be?

BELD. How soon is what to be?

POLLY [To BELD.] The wedding, of course. Such a slowness! [To SIM.] Oh, no hurry!

SIM. [Suddenly sitting upright.] Hey?

BELD. [Suddenly sitting upright.] What?

POLLY. [To BELD.] You don't mean to say you haven't seen it? Double-tut! Such a slowness! [To SIM.] They're quarreling like cats and dogs now!

BELD. Humph! [Sits thoughtful, smoking.]

SIM. [Interested, amused, rather incredulous.] Oh, come!

POLLY. Fact! Ask Janie. We had to fake up an excuse this morning and run away, they were getting so spicy. *We* didn't want to stay there and see it —

[Enter JANIE R. D.]

JANIE. Well, Billy, welcome to our midst!

SIM. Here's herself!

[*Business of shaking hands cordially. Everybody rises, chairs scraping, some confusion. Enter PON L. U. with tray of glasses, siphon, whiskey, ice, etc. Comes D. C.*]

SIM. [To JANIE, shaking hands.] You're looking fine!

BELD. [Seeing PON.] That's right. Set it down anywhere — here, this'll do. [*Pushes things on smoking-table to one side. To SIM.*] High-ball, Billy?

JANIE. [*Interrupting.*] No, the other table, there's more room —

POLLY. Wait, I'll move —

SIM. [To BELD.] Thanks, I will.

} All this
almost at
once.

[Exit PON. *Business with high-balls, men drinking, both ladies refusing, while talk goes on. Everybody seated.*]

SIM. [*Glass in one hand, cigar in the other, looking around, jolly.*] This is the life, hey? Here's how! [*Drinks. To JANIE.*] I like your celestial butler. [To BELD.] Is everybody on the place Chinese?

BELD. No, all kinds. [To JANIE.] That reminds me, I want you to ask Black to come to lunch to-day.

JANIE. [*Astounded.*] Mr. Black? Ask him to lunch?

BELD. [*Authoritative.*] Yes, don't forget. He'll be here to see me in a little, and you can ask him then.

JANIE. [*Same business, protesting.*] But, Jim — [*Halts, glances at the others. Hurriedly, trying to appear indifferent.*] Oh, very well!

SIM. Who's Mr. Black, if it's a fair question?

BELD. He's my superintendent.

SIM. Oh.

JANIE. [*Quickly, over-emphatic.*] The *nicest* fellow, and so good-looking —

POLLY. Buffalo Bill style. You ought to see him ride!

SIM. [*Not interested.*] Um-hum! [*Finishes drink. Change of manner.*] Well, that *is* a jolt about Archie Hughes and Mrs. Kebler. And after all the talk, too! He was crazy about her.

JANIE. That was *before*, though —

SIM. Eh? Oh, before she got the divorce.

JANIE. *Afterwards* it's different.

SIM. [*Nods.*] Sure. [*Reflects, smoking.*] Well, after all, Arch doesn't *have* to marry her.

BELD. [*A little troubled.*] No, but —

POLLY. [*Recklessly.*] Vance Henderson *did*!

BELD. [*Shakes head.*] Yes, but everybody isn't as square as Vance.

[*A pause.*]

JANIE. I always liked Laura, too.

POLLY. So did I.

SIM. [*Tentatively, glancing from one to another.*] I suppose you don't see anything of them?

[*A pause.*]

SIM. Well, that's pretty rough, but of course —

[*A pause.*]

SIM. They're both good sports, though, I daresay they can stand it. [*Reminiscently.*] George, how well she used to play auction!

BELD. Vance is a corker, too.

JANIE. [*Slight sigh.*] Yes, I miss Laura that way. Marion Kebler doesn't know the first thing about the

game, and she *will* play — [*Breaks off suddenly, looking off R.*]

SIM. Eh? [*Turns to follow her gaze. Gets up.*] Oh, Mrs. Kebler!

[*Enter MRS. K. R. D. With effusion.*] Why, Mr. Simcoe! I just heard that you'd arrived. So glad! [*Business of greetings.*]

MRS. K. [*Affected carelessness, looking around.*] Why, Mr. Hughes isn't here! [*To BELD.*] I don't believe he can know that Billy's come.

BELD. [*Real carelessness.*] Oh, he'll turn up presently. [*Goes U. C.*]

MRS. K. [*To JANIE.*] Don't you think you ought to send somebody to tell him?

[*POLLY and SIM. exchange a significant grimace behind her back.*]

JANIE. [*A little impatient.*] Oh, I'm not going fussing after him that way. Men hate that. [*Goes U. C. joining BELDING.*]

[*POLLY and SIM. exchange another grimace. MRS. K. turning abruptly, catches them. An instant of silence while she stands looking at them.*]

[*Enter BLACK L. U. Business of speaking to BELD. JANIE business of speaking to BLACK.*]

[*POLLY L. D. C. MRS. K. D. C. SIM. R. D. C.*]

SIM. [*Disconcerted.*] Oh — er — ah — I *would* like to see Arch.

POLLY. [*Same.*] Ah — ahem — [*Coughs*] — I wonder where Mr. Hughes can be!

BELD. [*Calls.*] Oh, Sim.! [*Comes D. C. with JANIE and BLACK. To SIM.*] This is Mr. Black that I was telling you about.

[*Business of introductions. Men shake hands.*]

JANIE. [*Addressing everybody.*] Let's take Billy around and show him the grounds. There'll be time before luncheon.

POLLY. [*Pointedly.*] Maybe we'll run into Mr. Hughes, too.

BELD. Well, I have a little business here with Black—

SIM. All right, we'll excuse you, Jimmie. [*Goes U. C. with POLLY and MRS. K. Business of standing in talk at head of steps.*]

JANIE. [*D. C. with BELD. Calls.*] The Japanese garden first, Marion, I'll catch up.

[*Exeunt MRS. K., POLLY and SIM. slowly by steps, talking.*]

[BLACK L. D.]

JANIE. [*To BELD. Low voice.*] I can't understand what you mean to do —

BELD. Never mind. I'm trying something. [*Loud.*] Good-bye, tell 'em I'll be there in a little while.

JANIE. [*Troubled.*] I'd like to know — [*Abruptly, changing voice and expression as she notices BLACK's proximity.*] Luncheon at half-past one, did I tell you, Mr. Black? Don't forget! [*Going c.*] So pleased you can come! [*Exit.*]

BELD. [*D. C. Pleasantly.*] Well, Black? Er — sit down, won't you? Have something? [*Business with tray of ice, whiskey, etc.*]

BLACK. Thank ye, I don't guess I want any, Mr. Belding. [*Stands D. L. C.*]

BELD. [*Same business. Civil.*] No? Maybe you — ? [*Offers cigar.*] No? [*Business of lighting his own.*] Well, now — ? [*Sits R.*]

BLACK. [*Straightforward.*] What I wanted to talk to you about was something I don't think I'd ought to

keep from you any longer — even if I could. It's about the young lady, your sister — leastways your wife's sister — it's about her and myself. [*Pauses.*]

[BELD. [*Civil, undisturbed, knocking ash from his cigar.*] Yes?

BLACK. [*With effort, but firmly.*] I love her.

[*Silence.*]

BLACK. I love her and I — I want to marry her, Mr. Belding.

BELD. [*Collectedly.*] Well, what does *she* say about it?

BLACK. I haven't told her.

BELD. [*Good-natured incredulity.*] Haven't, eh?

BLACK. [*Moves a step nearer, looks straight at him, without raising his voice but more slowly and distinctly.*] I said I hadn't told her.

[*They eye each other for a moment.*]

BELD. [*Looks away. Slight confusion.*] Er — well, you know most men do — most men would have. It wouldn't have been any particular harm if you had told her. I — I didn't mean — [*Halts, business with his cigar evidently to cover up embarrassment.*]

BLACK. [*After a moment, while he waits for BELDING to finish.*] I ain't saying she don't know, because I reckon I've showed it — a man can't always help that. And girls most generally know —

BELD. [*Sympathetic.*] Oh yes. I understand.

BLACK. But I thought I ought to talk to you first, seeing you're kind of like a gardeén to her while she's here in your house. If she'd had ar'y father or brother, I'd have gone to him.

BELD. [*Frank curiosity.*] Well now, why?

BLACK. Because of the kind of man I am, and the

kind of girl she is. 'T wouldn't have been right. I know I ain't fitten for her —

BELD. [*Interrupting, civil, deprecating.*] Why, Black, I — I wouldn't — you — ah —

BLACK. [*Simply.*] There ain't any man's fitten for a real good woman.

BELD. [*Embarrassed.*] Perhaps not, but —

BLACK. I don't claim to be better than the run, but I ain't any worse. I'll tell you or any of her men-folks, if she's got any that has a right to know, all about myself —

BELD. [*Hastily.*] No, no, that's all right — I know you're all right —

BLACK. But it ain't that what I was aiming to say — that ain't all of it. If she was to marry me, I couldn't give her nor do for her like she's been brung up to. I — I could only love her and work for her.

[*Pause.* BELD. *puts down his cigar, sits looking away from BLACK, picks up one of the tumblers left on the smoking-table, and turns it around mechanically.*]

BLACK. I ain't like the men she's always known —

BELD. [*Same business.*] No, you aren't!

BLACK. I ain't had much of an education. I expect I don't talk good grammar sometimes. I act rough, and I look rough. [*Glances down over himself.*] That's what I mean when I say that let alone everything else, I ain't fitten for her — [*Breaks off as BELD. makes an inarticulate sound.*] Sir?

BELD. Nothing. [*Rises abruptly, takes a step or two away.*] I didn't say anything.

BLACK. So when I'd set and thought about it, I seen the thing for me to do was to come and tell you and — [*Stops. With an effort.*] — and if you say so, Mr. Beld-

ing, I'll clear out. I won't speak to her nor see her again.

[*A pause. BELD. stands by smoking-table, playing with tumbler again.*]

BELD. Why, I — I don't see any reason why you should do that, Black. Go away, I mean. I think myself you're all right. If you want to ask her to marry you, I haven't any objection —

[*BLACK makes a movement.*]

BELD. Eh? [*Glances at him, looks away instantly, and continues hurriedly.*] Those things that you think are so much against you don't really count. [*Pauses. With savage conviction.*] They oughtn't to count anyway, damn it! [*Recollecting himself immediately.*] I take it Nina's given you some reason to think — some encouragement, that is? So, if you —

[*A pause. Their eyes meet. BLACK impulsively puts out his hand. BELD., after an infinitesimal hesitation, takes it.*]

BLACK. [*Huskily and brokenly.*] Mr. Belding, you — I — you're treating me mighty white. I wouldn't have blamed you none if you'd got mad, and cussed me out. I can't help loving her, and she — she acts like she likes me a little, and so — but I didn't want to take no unfair advantage —

BELD. [*During above stands with hands in pockets, looking down, restlessly moving one foot. Interrupts, suddenly turning towards BLACK. Loud geniality.*] Maybe you'll take a drink now, hey? [*Business of mixing one.*]

BLACK. [*Hardly heeding him. Excited.*] Hey? Thankye. [*Takes tumbler mechanically.*] How soon do you guess I can see her?

BELD. Why, you're coming to luncheon. [*Looks at watch.*] It's only half an hour or so.

BLACK. [*Disappointed.*] Yes, but I won't get no chanst to speak to her with all them people round.

BELD. [*Same manner.*] Never you mind, old chap, I'll fix it up so you can get her by herself a minute. [*Claps him on shoulder.*] Here's luck! [*Drinks.*]

BLACK. Hey? Oh! [*Discovers tumbler in his own hand.*] Well, I'll be damned! I didn't know I had this! [*Laughs excitedly; drinks; wipes mouth on shirtsleeve; looks at BELD.; laughs again.*] I expect I'm acting kind of loco, but you know how it is. Half an hour! I'd ought to go and wash up. [*Looks himself over.*]

BELD. [*Looks himself over.*] I ought to, too. [*Confidentially.*] Say, Black, you don't mind my telling you something — ?

BLACK. Hey?

BELD. While you're about it, I'd change my clothes if I were in your place. You've got some — er — some city clothes, haven't you?

BLACK. Sure. My Sunday suit.

BELD. Of course what you've got on are all right for the ranch, but — well, there're these strangers here — ladies, you know — [*Confidential.*] — you don't mind my mentioning it?

BLACK. [*Simply.*] Why, I'm right down obliged to you, Mr. Belding. I don't know as I'd have thought of it myself. I've always allowed as long as you kept clean and decent, your clothes didn't make no difference.

BELD. [*Hastily.*] Certainly. Only — well, it doesn't hurt to dress once in a while like these fellows that come out here from the East. They think you don't know how to put on anything but spurs and a flannel

shirt and a neck-handkerchief — seem to have an idea the country is only half civilized still. Oh, speaking of neck-handkerchiefs, haven't you got one of these ties that come all made up ready to put on? They're very nice and no trouble at all —

BLACK. [*More interested.*] Yes, I got one of them at the Bon Ton store over to Miraflores the other day. I thought it would be kind of handy.

[*Voices heard off c. Both men glance in that direction, and begin to go U. L. talking as they go.*]

BELD. There's some stuff you can put on your hair to make it go this way. [*Gesture with his fingers as of making a curl on his forehead.*] You know?

BLACK. Oh, you can do that with soap. I seen the boys do it often —

[*Voices heard off, nearer.*]

BELD. Yes. [*Looks off c.*] They're all coming back, but you have plenty of time. [*Accompanies BLACK towards door L. U.*] Well, see you presently.

[*Exit BLACK L. U.*]

[*Enter at the same moment NINA R. U. Enter at c. by steps JANIE, POLLY, MRS. K., SIMCOE. Business of greetings between NINA and SIMCOE, talk, laughter. MRS. K., NINA, POLLY, SIMCOE all at R. U. business of introducing SIMCOE to the parrot. Laughter, screams, confusion. "Pretty Polly! — Polly want a cracker?" etc. During this, JANIE detaches herself from group and comes D. C. with BELD.*]

JANIE. [*To BELD. anxious.*] Well?

[*Burst of laughter from group around parrot. JANIE and BELD. both business of turning at intervals to keep an eye and ear on the others.*]

BELD. [*To JANIE.*] Well what?

JANIE. Did your plan work?

POLLY. [R. U. screaming.] Mercy, do be careful! He bites sometimes!

[JANIE and BELD. *same business.*]

BELD. [To JANIE.] I don't know. I can't tell yet.

JANIE. [*Expostulating.*] But Jim! What did you do anyhow? Is he going to leave?

SIM. [R. U.] I'm going to try him with a cigarette. Polly want a cigarette?

[JANIE and BELD. *same business.*]

BELD. [To JANIE.] No, no! That wouldn't do any good. Now see here, Janie, all we can do for the present is to keep still, and say nothing —

[*Burst of laughter from the others.* JANIE and BELD. *same business.*]

NINA. [*Comes D. C.*] That poor misguided bird is eating a cigarette! I do hope it won't make him sick. [*Sits on arm of chair R. D. To BELD. with elaborate assumption of carelessness.*] Wasn't that Mr. Black I saw with you just now?

BELD. [*Assumption of carelessness.*] Yes. He's coming back directly for luncheon.

SIM. [*Comes D. C.*] Who's that? Pawnee Bill — Chief Horse's Neck, or whatever his name is? I'd like to see him rope a broncho. Do you suppose he'd do it? For a consideration, of course?

NINA. [*Frigid.*] No, I don't think he would. [*Rises lazily, and turns her back on him.*]

SIM. [*Surprised.*] Eh?

JANIE. [*Interposing quickly, exaggerated enthusiasm.*] Oh, I say, all of you, there's time for a hand or two before luncheon. Let's see, how many of us are there?

[*Movement. Business of everybody except NINA looking around to count heads.*]

POLLY. Table and a half —

JANIE. [*Interrupting.*] I'll stay out —

BELD. [*Interrupting.*] We'd better both of us stay out —

SIM. [*Interrupting.*] Oh, don't do that! It would be too bad for you not to have any fun just because you're our hosts. Let's all cut —

MRS. K. [*Interrupting.*] Arch — I mean Mr. Hughes *must* be coming in soon —

POLLY. [*Interrupting.*] Then we'll be seven — that makes two tables with a dummy. Fine! [*Goes L. D. to table and begins clearing it off, getting out cards, score-pads, pencils, etc.*]

NINA. [*Cool.*] I don't care about playing.

POLLY. [*Same business.*] Oh, double-tut, Nina! Come on!

NINA. You can all take turns or cut in. That's what you've been doing all along. [*Goes U. L. C. Sits on railing, looking off over landscape.*]

[*A slight pause. All exchange meaning glances, except SIMCOE, who, at R. D. is lighting a cigar.*]

SIM. [*Goes L. D. to table which POLLY has been arranging, draws up chair, sits, shuffling pack of cards, smoking. After a casual glance around, speaks, loud, reckless manner.*] Well, if you don't mind my saying so, I know what I'd do —

[*General movement, everybody looking at him.*]

SIM. [*Same business.*] With two of the best bridge-players in the country not three miles off —

[*Movement.*]

JANIE. [*Exchanging glances with the other women.*] Well, you know, Billy — [*Pauses, embarrassed.*]

MRS. K. [*Stiffly.*] Of course it doesn't make any difference to a man, and you're visiting them anyhow —

POLLY. [*Interrupting, reckless.*] Well, I'd just as lief!

JANIE. [*Startled.*] Polly!

POLLY. [*Same manner.*] Why not?

BELD. [*Awkward.*] I don't suppose it really would be — ? [*Pauses, looks questioningly at his wife.*]

SIM. I can take the car and go over and get Vance and Laura in ten minutes, Mrs. Belding. Now, between ourselves — [*Looks all around.*] — what in thunder difference does it make? They both play well. It would be a lot more fun for everybody —

POLLY. [*Interrupting.*] And anyhow, Janie, what you do out here in California doesn't count. If they ever do come back East, you don't have to have anything to do with them just because of a few bridge-games here!

MRS. K. Yes, that's perfectly true, Janie. I've thought of that several times.

[*A pause.*]

MRS. K. I've always been fond of poor Laura.

POLLY. [*Enthusiastic.*] Oh, she's a dear!

SIM. [*Rises.*] Well, how about it, Mrs. Belding?

JANIE. [*Troubled.*] You see — we haven't gone near them once — and I feel — it seems as if somebody ought to go over with Billy, or it — it might look — you know? [*Glances around.*] I mean one of us — [*To Mrs. K and Polly.*]

MRS. K. Yes. Laura might refuse to come just to be nasty. It would be just like her.

BELD. [*Troubled.*] Well, under the circumstances, maybe it would be natural if she —

POLLY. [*Jumps up briskly.*] All right! I'll go! [*To SIMCOE.*] Let's!

SIM. You're on!

POLLY. Wait till I get my automobile things — !
[*Dashes U. C.*]

[*General movement.*]

SIM. [*Follows POLLY in more leisurely manner.*] Where'd your man put my coat, Jim?

BELD. I'll have him here in a minute. [*Goes L. D. touches bell-button.*]

NINA. [*On balustrade, leaning over to look. Calls.*] Here comes Mr. Hughes.

[*Enter PON L. D. Business of receiving instructions from BELD. Exit.*]

} All this
almost at
the same
time.

POLLY. [*Halts U. C. as she sees HUGHES coming up steps. To HUGHES.*] Hello, Billy's here! [*Exit R. U. running.*]

[*Enter HUGHES, top of steps.*]

HUGHES. [*Answering POLLY.*] Just heard. Hello, Sim.! How are you?

SIM. First-rate! You're looking fine, Arch.!

[*Business of shaking hands. General movement. Enter PON L. U. with SIMCOE's coat, goggles, etc.*]

HUGHES. This is the greatest place ever, Billy. Something doing every minute. Have you seen — [*Interrupts himself as PON advances, impassively holding out SIMCOE's things.*] Here, what's that for? [*Protesting.*] Oh, you're not going?

SIM. [*Business of getting into coat with PON's help.*] Just for a minute.

BELD. We're asking the Hendersons over to luncheon, and Billy's going to get them.

HUGHES. [*Astounded.*] The *Hendersons*? [*Casts an incredulous glance around. Recovers, assumes conventional manner.*] Why, that's great!

[*Exit PON. Enter POLLY R. U. with motor-coat, etc.*]

MRS. K. [*To HUGHES, warmly.*] Isn't it, though? I do so want to see Laura!

JANIE. Now Mr. Simcoe's here, we'll have just two tables with Vance and Laura, you see.

HUGHES. [*After a slight pause.*] Yes, I see. [*To POLLY.*] You going over, too?

POLLY. [*Cool.*] Yes, indeed. I've been meaning to call on them for ever so long.

[*SIM. and POLLY going U.*]

HUGHES. [*Sudden thought. Arrests her with a gesture and seizes SIMCOE's arm.*] Hold on a minute! [*To POLLY.*] Just one second if you want to see the grandest spectacle of modern times! [*Broad grin.*] I was beating it to the house as fast as I could so as to get you all ready for it —

[*General attention.*]

HUGHES. [*Impressive.*] It's Black!

[*Pause. Everybody staring, puzzled.*]

SIM. What d'ye mean *black*? What's black?

HUGHES. Haven't you met him? Jim's foreman?

SIM. Oh, him! Yeah. What about him?

HUGHES. [*Warning gesture, glancing over his shoulder.*] Hush! He'll be here any minute. I met him just now starting for the house. Say, he's all gotten up! You wait! Bond Street and Fifth Avenue sit up and take notice! You just wait! [*Makes a sweeping gesture down over his own figure.*] Swellest ever! I'm going to ask him who his tailor is. He's got his hair down this way

[*Makes gesture of arranging a "cow-lick" on his forehead.*]
I don't know how they make it stick — some kind of goo, I suppose —

[*NINA abruptly gets down from balustrade, stands looking off c.*]

BELD. [*Interrupting HUGHES sharply.*] Sh-h, Arch! He's coming.

[*Enter BLACK at step c.*]

[*NINA L. U. C. stands motionless, looking at him. SIMCOE, HUGHES, BELDING R. U. C. JANIE R. C. farther down. MRS. K., POLLY L. C. D. A momentary silence. BELD. serious. SIMCOE, HUGHES grinning. POLLY, MRS. K. business of taking one look at BLACK, turning away with their backs to him and holding onto each other with stifled giggles.*]

BELD. [*Glances towards POLLY and MRS. K. with a frown. Turns to BLACK with pleasant manner a trifle exaggerated.*] Oh, here you are, Black!

BLACK. [*Not at all embarrassed. Simply.*] Yes, sir. [*To JANIE.*] I guess maybe I'm a little ahead of time, ma'am, but I know ladies don't like to have the meals setting round waiting.

[*POLLY and MRS. K. same business.*]

JANIE. [*A little disconcerted, casting a glance of annoyance at POLLY and MRS. K.*] Yes — that is, no — I mean we're glad to have you any time, Mr. Black. You — you know everybody, of course — ? Mr. Simcoe —

SIM. [*Exaggerated heartiness.*] Why, certainly! Don't you remember I met Mr. Black just a little while ago, when I came. [*To BLACK.*] We were just talking about you.

[*Outburst of giggles from POLLY and MRS. K. NINA*

has continued to stand motionless, looking at BLACK, now turns sharply and looks at the others.]

JANE. [*Crossing L. D. Affected gay carelessness.*] What are you two girls having so much fun over all to yourselves? [*Seizes an arm of each, and wheeling them around with back to others, makes a warning grimace in their faces, giving each one a slight shake.*]

[*Enter PON L. U. with tray of cocktails.*]

BELD. [*Going U. c.*] Well, I don't like to hurry you, Billy, but if you're going after the Hendersons —

SIM. All right. [*Calls.*] Miss Maxwell, if you're ready — ? [*Starting c.*]

HUGHES. Hold on, Billy, here's Pon with the drink-stuff.

POLLY. [*Tying on veil, answers SIMCOE excitedly.*] One second! [*To JANIE.*] Oh, fix this while I put on my gloves, will you?

[*General movement. PON passing cocktails. Nobody pays any attention to BLACK who stands U. looking at NINA. Makes a step nearer her.*]

NINA. [*Comes D. L. crossing in front of BLACK, but not looking at him. Speaks to PON with gayety as he offers tray.*] Give me one of those for Miss Maxwell, Pon, she's busy. [*Takes glass from tray and runs D. to other women.*] Here, Polly!

POLLY. [*Burlesque fervor.*] Nina, you're an angel! Just pour it down me while I get these things on!

[*Business of NINA holding the glass to POLLY's lips, while POLLY puts on gloves, JANIE ties her veil, MRS. K. buttons her coat. Screams of laughter.*]

BELD. [*To BLACK.*] Cocktail?

BLACK. [*Gazes after NINA.*] No sir, thankye. [*Runs finger around collar, moving neck uneasily.*]

HUGHES. [*Agreeable.*] That's a little tight, isn't it?

BLACK. I ain't used to 'em much. I generally wear a handkerchief, you know.

HUGHES. [*Same manner.*] Yes, it must be more comfortable. Who is your tailor, Mr. Black?

[HUGHES, BLACK L. U. C. BELD. C. *at top of steps.* SIM. *at c. a step down.* WOMEN D. R. MRS. K. *nudges POLLY, both smothered giggles.* JANIE *annoyed and anxious.* NINA *biting her lips.*]

BLACK. [*Simple and unsuspecting.*] Why, Mr. Hughes, I got this here suit at the Bon Ton. They ain't any tailors round here, you know. [*Watches NINA wistfully.*]

BELD. [*Crossly.*] Confound it, Arch, you think as much about clothes as a woman!

POLLY. [*Runs U. C.*] Ready whenever you are, Mr. Simcoe.

SIM. All right!

[*Both going C.*]

NINA. [*Runs U. C. passing as before directly in front of BLACK but without looking at him. Calls.*] Tell Laura lots of love, and I'd have been over to see her before, only —

JANIE [*Same business as NINA; interrupting.*] Nina and I kept waiting for each other, and we somehow never *could* make a date, tell her!

MRS. K. [*Same business as others.*] Tell her I just got here. I haven't had time to go anywhere yet —

POLLY. [*Going. Cuts them short impatiently.*] I know, I know! I'll say all those things —

[*Exit C. POLLY and SIM. All stand a moment, watching them. PON goes about gathering up empty glasses, business of re-arranging bottles, siphon and fresh glasses, replenishing ice, etc., on smoking-table. Exit L. D.*]

MRS. K. [*Turns away, coming D.*] Well, we're all being as nice as we can to Laura and Vance, but you can't tell. Maybe they'll come and maybe they won't. [*Sits R. D.*]

HUGHES. [*Turns away, coming D. Lights cigarette. Laughs.*] Don't worry! They'll come! I never saw two people more solidly bored in my life! [*Stands D. R. business of talking with MRS. K.*]

NINA. [*Turns away, coming D. Faces BLACK squarely. Looks at him coldly.*] Oh, Mr. Black! [*Continues, going D. L. sits at card-table with her back to him, takes up pack of cards, shuffling.*]

[*BLACK stands U. looking after her. Looks all around. JANIE at C. looks from NINA to BLACK, then at BELD. BELD. same business, turning towards JANIE. Both nervously begin talking almost at once.*]

JANIE. Going to play, Nina? You've changed your mind?

BELD. [*To BLACK, flurried.*] Er — ah — won't you come into the game? You play, don't you?

NINA. [*Shuffling cards. Cool, half turning towards JANIE, but avoiding looking at BLACK.*] Yes, I believe I will play, for once.

BLACK. [*Gives one more look around the stage and at NINA. To BELDING, calmly, but with some effort.*] No, I don't guess I can play this game, Mr. Belding. [*Walks over to BELD. Business of talking together, moving towards steps. Exeunt at steps unnoticed by others.*]

JANIE. [*Sits L. D. by card-table, business of talking with NINA while they arrange cards. NINA spreads a pack on the table.*]

JANIE. [*Calls across to HUGHES and MRS. K.*] All ready! Come and cut!

[HUGHES and MRS. K. turn. *Momentary surprise.*]

HUGHES. [*Looks around.*] Where's Jim? And your friend with the — [*Makes gesture describing "cow-lick" on his forehead.*]

MRS. K. [*Rises promptly and crosses L.*] Nina! Are you actually going to play?

JANIE. [*To HUGHES, glancing around indifferently.*] Oh, they must have gone somewhere. They'll be back, of course. [*Draws card.*] Six of spades! [*Shows it.*]

[*Business of everybody drawing.*]

HUGHES. Looks as if you'd got the deal, Miss King, and me for a partner into the bargain. [*Sits opposite her. Laugh.*] Did you ever see anything quite so hicky as Black?

[*All seated.*]

NINA. [*Dealing.*] Where did you get that word, Mr. Hughes? It's lovely! *Hicky* just fits him. He reminds me of a beau our cook had once.

JANIE. Well, don't any of you laugh that way again, please. He might suspect something.

[*All business of gathering up and sorting hands.*]

MRS. K. I daresay we all did behave badly, but I couldn't have helped laughing if I had been going to be decapitated for it the next minute.

NINA. [*To HUGHES.*] Can you let me have a cigarette?

HUGHES. [*Business of feeling in his pockets, and finding cigarette-case empty.*] I'm just out. Wait a minute. [*Rises, crosses R. D. takes up smoking-table and carries it bodily over to the card-table, disposing it conveniently.*] Here! Oh, joy! Pon's left us something to keep us from dying of thirst! [*Business of lighting NINA's cigarette.*]

NINA. [*Looks over hand. Smokes. Studies.*] Two spades!

JANIE. [*Looks over cards.*] Mercy, I can't say anything. You ought to see this hand!

[*All look at HUGHES. HUGHES studies cards in silence. Finally slaps fingers on edge of table in the gesture familiar to card-players when they "pass."*]

[*Enter BELD. by steps slowly, preoccupied look.*]

MRS. K. Are you by, Arch? [*Studies cards.*] What did you say, Nina? Two *spades*? [*Fiddles with cards uncertainly.*] Gracious, I don't know what to do! Two spades! What do you suppose that means? Nina's played so seldom I haven't an *idea* how she bids.

[*A pause. BELDING up-stage, glances at them and seeing that they are occupied, walks up and down without coming any nearer.*]

MRS. K. Well, I suppose you'll *kill* me when you see this hand, Janie, but I simply *can't* take it away from her —

HUGHES. [*Impatient.*] All right then, two spades gets it? [*Looks around. All silent.*] Go ahead! [*Looks at JANIE, and makes ready his own hand while waiting for her to lead.*] It's my lay-down.

[*JANIE leads. HUGHES spreads his hand, rises. To NINA.*] Some assistance, partner!

NINA. [*Eyes on cards.*] Grand!

[*Three women business of playing the hand.*]

HUGHES. [*Strolls U.*] What's the matter, Jim? You look as if you'd robbed a henroost.

BELD. [*Walks to and fro, restless.*] That's about the way I feel.

HUGHES. [*Lounges L. U. to telescope.*] Why? About the Hendersons? Oh, pshaw, bet you they'll be too glad they're asked to feel sore. [*Adjusts telescope, looks through it, speaking as he does so.*] Hello, there's some-

body on the road now — [*Business with telescope.*] — going, though, not coming — [*Same business.*] — and on horseback, too, so it can't be — [*Ejaculation.*] — Hi! It looks like Black!

BELD. [*Halting c.*] It is Black, I daresay. He asked me for his time just now.

HUGHES. [*Turns from telescope.*] Asked for his time?

BELD. [*Resumes restless pacing.*] His pay, you know — that's what they all call it. He's going. For good, I mean.

HUGHES. [*Indifferent.*] Oh! That won't make you any trouble, I hope. You can get another superintendent? [*Turns again to telescope.*]

BELD. [*Sits on well-curb, gloomy expression.*] Oh yes, I expect so.

[*Women at table business of finishing hand. Outburst of talk. NINA and JANIE gathering up cards, MRS. K. entering score.*]

[*All speaking almost at once.*]

NINA. If you had led your knave of hearts through, Marion —

JANIE. That was what I was praying for —

MRS. K. But how was I to know she had the king — ?

NINA. Why, you could *see* it wasn't in dummy — !

JANIE. Anyhow, put her *in*, you know, put her *in* — that was your play — !

NINA. [*Interfering with the score.*] We had four honors — !

HUGHES. [*Up-stage, turns from telescope. Calls.*] There's a motor coming! It looks like — [*Turns back. Business with telescope. Shouts while still looking through it.*] I say, Billy's got 'em! I can see 'em! They're coming!

[*All three women slight movement. Speak at once but without great enthusiasm, business of being too much occupied with the game. BELD. shifts position, then stands c. by well.*]

JANIE. Oh, *are* they? That's nice! It's my deal, isn't it? [*Begins dealing.*]

MRS. K. Oh, *are* they? We'll have to hurry up and finish this rubber. [*Calls.*] Come back, Mr. Hughes, you're a game in, already!

NINA. Oh, *are* they? Won't that be fun? [*Hands pack of cards to MRS. K.*] It's your make-up.

HUGHES. [*Comes D. C. Pauses by BELD.*] Told you so! I knew they'd come! [*Continues D. Business of mixing himself a drink. Stands D. C. back to audience, glass in one hand, cigar in the other.*] Tell you what it is, life out here is all right for a little while. We're having a bully time with you two, visiting. But *live* here — ! [*Breaks off, shaking head. Drinks.*] Not for mine! And honestly, Jim, when the season's over, won't you and Mrs. Jim be ready enough to get back to civilization?

BELD. Civilization! [*Stares all around.* HUGHES D. C. *with drink; women with cards, cigarettes, etc.* MRS. K. *just pouring out a glass of whisky and soda. Suddenly bursts into violent laughter.*] Ha-ha! Oh ho-ho-ho! Ha-ha-ha!

CURTAIN

THE WEARIN' O' THE GREEN

A FARCE IN ONE ACT

CHARACTERS IN THE ORDER IN WHICH THEY APPEAR

MOLLIE [*Mrs. Jack Dillon*]

NORAH, *a housemaid*

JACK DILLON

DAN HOLT, *Mrs. Dillon's brother*

MISS KATHLEEN TRAVERS, *a guest of the DILLONS*

AMES, *a detective*

DICK WRIGHT, *costumed as a ward boss*

MAZIE [*Mrs. Dick Wright*] *costumed as a nursemaid*

MISS VIOLET STERNBERG, *guest of the WRIGHTS*

HARRY COOPER, *costumed as Saint Patrick*

ELSIE COOPER, " " *a banshee*

NANCY COOPER, " " *a cook*

JOE KING, " " *the Tam-many Tiger*

TOM LOWELL, *costumed as a plumber*

ERNEST CARSON " " *a day-laborer*

Among those present at Mr. and Mrs. JACK DILLON's informal costume dance, evening of March 17.

MICHAEL MURPHY, *a professional plumber*

"KID" SAMPSON, " " *cracksman*

MR. JAMES BRYAN

TIME: the present.

SCENE: the living-room of the Dillon residence, 2430 Adams Road, North Hill.

NOTE

Any number of extra people may of course be introduced as guests, servants, etc., in any costume appropriate to the occasion. The only important point is that, as even a farce must have a certain fantastic probability about it, the real plumber, the imitation plumber, and the burglar must be dressed alike, and resemble one another in height and size enough for the mistakes about their identity to be believable.

[*Living-room of the DILLON residence, evening of Saint Patrick's Day. Back c. double glass doors, opening on terrace, windows either side, book-shelves between. R. U. wide archway opening into drawing-room, quantity of palms, potted plants, etc., arranged on both sides of it. R. D. large library table with chairs, reading-lamp, books, writing-set, etc. L. U. door opposite drawing-room door. Fireplace. Flanking fireplace at right angles, facing audience, big davenport lounge with cushions, footstools, etc. Reading-lamp on small table at end of lounge. L. D. telephone-table and chair. Pictures, photographs, books, rugs, easy-chairs, lighted lamps, draperies at doors and windows, trifles, flowers, etc. As curtain rises, MOLLIE is discovered R. U. giving directions to man-of-all-work about arrangement of plants by drawing-room door.*]

MOLLIE. [*In blouse and street-skirt, hair rather tumbled.*] A little farther over that way, please. I want the Victrola screened off so that it won't show . . . [*Pause.*] . . . That big palm . . . [*Pause, looks on while he obeys her.*] . . . You'll have to leave a space

for whoever's running it to stand. . . . [*Same business.*] . . . That'll do . . . [*Same business.*] Yes, that's all. [*Dismisses him with a nod.*]

[*Exit man R. Enter NORAH L.*]

MOLLIE. [*Comes slowly down R. drops into chair by table, with tired air. Yawns.*] O-oh! [*Turns head and sees NORAH. Languidly motions to her.*] Oh, have you got something there for me to eat, Norah? Well, bring it here, I'm too tired to move. Put it on the table, put it on the floor, put it anywhere.

NORAH. Yes, ma'am. [*Comes down c. carrying large tray with covered dishes, tea-service, bottle of whiskey and siphon, bowl of cracked ice, etc. Arranges it on end of table nearest MOLLIE.*]

MOLLIE. What have you got there? Chicken? [*Sits up with more interest.*] Oh, I don't want that whiskey and seltzer, Norah. The idea of bringing me that stuff!

NORAH. [*Strong Irish brogue.*] Misther Dillon told me to, ma'am. He said you'd be needin' somethin' after bein' on yer feet all da-ay long gettin' ready for the party.

MOLLIE. Well, I don't need *that*. What I want is some hot tea. [*Business of pouring tea, beginning to eat, etc.*] Take it off the tray, Norah. It's only in the way.

NORAH. Yes, ma'am. [*Removes whiskey, seltzer and ice from tray and arranges it all on the other end of the table. Business of serving the luncheon.*]

MOLLIE. [*Eating.*] Tell Katie these sandwiches are all right. She understand I want her to have everything ready to serve the supper at twelve o'clock — ?

NORAH. Yes, ma'am.

MOLLIE. Tell her to be sure and have everything very *hot* — *hot* boiled potatoes, and *hot* tea, and *hot* whiskey-punch, and everything.

NORAH. Yes, ma'am.

MOLLIE. [*Eating. Meditative.*] Well, I believe everything's ready, and I've thought of everything. [*Sudden recollection.*] Oh, Norah, did Mr. Dillon have any dinner?

NORAH. Oh yes, ma'am. Him and Mr. Holt both had theirs in the dining-room an hour ago. They're both all dthressed.

MOLLIE. What? Already?

NORAH. Yes, ma'am, and I'm to go up and hook Miss Travers at tin o'clock.

MOLLIE. [*Glances at clock on mantel.*] Well, I suppose it's about time for me to go and get my costume on, too. [*Turns away from table, sits meditative.*]

[NORAH *business of gathering up napkin, rearranging tray to carry away, etc.*]

MOLLIE. Oh, Norah, I wanted to ask you, do the girls ever wear their hair down their backs in the old country?

NORAH. [*Superior air.*] Some does, ma'am, but it looks awful *jay*.

MOLLIE. [*Amused.*] Well, in that case, I believe I'll put mine up as usual. I don't want to look *jay*. [*Rises. Crosses L.*] Mercy, I *am* tired! A hot bath will do me good . . . [*Stops.*] . . . Oh, Norah, did the plumber come?

NORAH. [*Arranging tray still.*] Not yet, ma'am.

MOLLIE. Not *yet*? Why, he'll never get here *now*! Didn't he telephone, or say anything about coming to-morrow?

NORAH. [*Looking down. Conscious.*] No, ma'am. I — I'm thinkin' he'll come to-night, ma'am.

MOLLIE. [*Astonished.*] To-night?

NORAH. [*Same business. Fingers her apron.*] Yes, ma'am. He promised to, ye know, ma'am.

MOLLIE. He promised, I know, but — [*Looks at NORAH. Begins to be enlightened.*] Do you know him, Norah?

NORAH. [*Glib.*] Oh, sure, ma'am. 'Tis Mike Murphy, me own firrst cousin on the father's side that married a Flannery's nephew.

[*Slight pause.*]

MOLLIE. [*Dryly.*] Oh! It will certainly be very nice of him to come so late after hours. Only you'll have to tell him to be very quiet about his work because I can't have my guests disturbed by any plumbing noises.

NORAH. [*Going L.*] Oh, Mike'll kape himself quiet, ma'am. Mike'll give yez good satisfaction, ma'am, no fear.

[*Exit NORAH with tray, leaving whiskey, etc., on table. DILLON's voice heard off R. singing.*]

DILL. [*Off R.*] "The harp that once, thro Tara's halls
The soul of music shed — "

MOLLIE. [*Rises. Calls.*] Hoo-hoo! Jack! Here I am! Come in here and let's see you.

[*Enter R. DILL. dressed as traditional stage Irishman, green tail-coat, striped waist-coat, knee-breeches, shoes with buckles, stock, frilled shirt, bell-crowned silk hat with a short pipe stuck in the band in front, shillelagh, etc.*]
[*Comes D. C. singing.*]

"Now hangs as mute on Tara's walls,
As tum-tee-tum, tra-la-a!"

[*Flourishes shillelagh, takes a jig-step or two, strikes attitude.*]

DILL. [*Inquiringly.*] Well?

MOLLIE. [*Enthusiastic.*] Jack, you look *great!*

DILL. That's what I thought myself. [*Surveys her.*]
I say, you're not going to wear *that*, are you?

MOLLIE. *This?* Gracious, no! I haven't dressed yet, I've been too busy. [*Sits L. on arm of lounge and beckons to him.*] Come here a minute, and let me fix your cravat.

[*He crosses L. to her. Business of adjusting his cravat, etc.*]

MOLLIE. Oh, Jack, I'm the dearest thing alive!

DILL. [*Sympathetic.*] Why, you poor little tired Toots! Can't you go and — wash your head, or something? It's always relieved me to let the water run on my head when . . . [*Stops abruptly.*] . . . when I've been — er — tired out, you know.

MOLLIE. [*Amused.*] I don't believe it would do me much good to wash my head just now. We're lucky to have any water running at all, though. But the plumber's coming, so it'll be all right.

DILL. The plumber? [*Looks at watch.*] At ten o'clock at night?

MOLLIE. [*Gesture.*] Set your mind at rest! He'll get here! I've just discovered he's Norah's beau.

DILL. Is that so? Did she tell you?

MOLLIE. Of course not. That's how I know.

DILL. Oh, that's how you *know!* But what makes you think he'll come to-night?

MOLLIE. [*Impatient.*] Oh, Jack, don't be a *man!*

DILL. [*Shrugs.*] All right! [*Crosses R. to table, lays down hat and stick; business of lighting cigarette.* MOLLIE L. curled up on lounge.]

DILL. [*Returning. Takes position on hearth-rug. Confidential, lowering voice.*] Talking about heart-interest, how's Kathleen?

MOLLIE. Cheerful as a hearse! Ever since I told her that we could *not* — simply *could not* ask Jim Bryan, she . . . [*Shrugs, expressing helplessness.*]

DILL. [*Smoking.*] I'd have asked him. I'd let him come here as much as he wants to. It's no business of ours who Kathleen marries.

MOLLE. [*Serious.*] Oh, you can't do things like that, Jack. We're responsible for everything that goes on in our house. Her mother would never forgive us. Mrs. Travers doesn't know anything about the Bryans, and she naturally thinks they must be terribly *common* because Jim's father has that plumbers' supplies house, or whatever it is. It *sounds* common, you know.

DILL. Bosh! Mrs. Travers is an old snob. Jim's a nice fellow; he was in my class at Yale. He's good enough for Kathleen Travers or anybody else, and so are his people. I know old Mr. Bryan, and he's a fine old Irish gentleman —

MOLLIE. [*Interrupting.*] You're Irish yourself, that's one reason you're standing up for them.

DILL. [*Continuing.*] I suppose Mrs. Travers is against the match because she thinks the Bryans aren't "*in society.*" [*Mimicking sarcastically.*] "*In society!*" Why, they're the salt of the earth, those people!

MOLLIE. [*Reasonably.*] That's just it, Jack. Somehow or other, the salt of the earth never *are* in society!

DILL. [*Grunts.*] Hungh! [*Throws cigarette-butt in fire, crosses R. Business of helping himself to another.*]

MOLLIE. [*Rising.*] Well, anyhow, I wasn't going to ask him here deliberately. [*Going L. Stops.*] Oh, Dan!

[Enter L. HOLT in policeman's costume, helmet, star on breast, club, etc., sauntering, swinging club, whistling "Fair Harvard." Swaggers to U. C. strikes attitude, salutes, still whistling.]

DILL. Hello, Danny! One of the finest, hey?

MOLLIE. [Enthusiastic.] Dan, you're perfectly stunningly handsome, that costume is so becoming! [Stands off and looks him over.] I don't believe anybody will recognize you.

HOLT. [Stops whistling abruptly.] Hey?

DILL. [Down R. Burst of laughter.] Ho-ho-ho! Ha-ha-ha!

HOLT. [Affecting to start. To MOLLIE.] Do you hear a noise, Mollie? Something like a braying somewhere?

MOLLIE. [Innocently.] No. What are you laughing at, Jack?

DILL. Never mind, Dan. They'll recognize you the minute you begin that "Fair Harvard" rag.

HOLT. [Coming down L.] You're in error. That's not "Fair Harvard." That's your noble old Irish air, "Believe me, if —"

DILL. [Interrupting.] Well, believe me, you'd better dig up something more Irish than that to whistle.

HOLT. As for instance?

DILL. As for instance. . . . [Seizes shillelagh, claps on hat, strikes attitude, singing at top of his lungs.] [Down R.]

"Ooola-boola, oh, Oola-boola," etc.

HOLT. [Down L. Same business.] Oh, call that Irish, hey? [Swings club, shouting.]

"Fair Harvard," etc,

MOLLIE. [*At c. distractedly, fingers in ears.*] Oh, boys, please —!

[DILL. and HOLT. L. and R. same business.]

[*Telephone rings.*]

MOLLIE. [*Same business.*] Do stop! You don't know what a racket you're making!

[DILL. and HOLT suddenly stop simultaneously, bursting into roars of laughter.] Oh, ho ho, ho! Ha-ha-ha!

MOLLIE. [*Resignedly.*] Well, have you got through? I thought I heard the telephone just now, but there was such a noise —

[*Telephone rings.*]

HOLT. [*Standing L. nearest to telephone, picks it up. Into telephone.*] Hello, hello! . . . Yes, Dillon's residence. . . . Yes, right here. [*To MOLLIE.*] Somebody for you, sis. Mrs. Wright, I think. [*As he hands her the instrument.*] Say, wait a minute, do you know what's been done with my flute?

MOLLIE. [*Seats herself at telephone.*] Oh, don't ask me where anything is, Dan. The whole house is topsy-turvy. [*Into the telephone.*] Yes? This is Mrs. Dillon. . . . Yes . . . [*Business of listening.*]

DILL. [*Sits R. To HOLT.*] What do you want of your flute anyhow? I never heard of a policeman going around with a flute.

HOLT. [*Places helmet and club on table R. Business of wandering around the room, searching.*] No? You don't realize, Jack, how limited your facilities for acquiring information are. [*Pauses by DILL. and taps him on the side of the head, affecting to listen. Shakes head, sadly.*] No use! All the wheels are still! Nothing works but his jaw. [*Works it up and down, DILL. resisting.*] Poor, poor fellow! Too bad!

DILL. [*Fighting him off.*] Here now, don't start another rough-house while Mollie's trying to telephone! [*They go U. C. DILLON takes newspaper from table and sits on lounge L. reading. HOLT continues search for flute which he finally discovers on book-shelves at back. Comes down R. C. Sits, business of inspecting flute, and occasionally trying a few notes.*]

MOLLIE. [*During above. Into telephone.*] Is that you, Mazie? . . . Oh, no I haven't been doing anything. It's so informal, there aren't any preparations needed. . . . Why yes, everything's to be as Irish as poss. . . . Why, it was Jack's idea, you know he's Irish. . . . What, *didn't* you? . . . Why, *yes*, Dillon's an Irish name, you know, Irish as kraut! . . . Eh? . . . Well, I meant *greens*, of course. . . . Why, we aren't going to have any supper to speak of, just boiled potatoes, and lots of tea, and no silver or china at all, just kitchen forks and spoons and tin cups. . . . Me? Oh, I'm going to wear a peasant costume. I don't quite know how they dress, but I've got a short skirt — well, not's so *very* short, you know, only about to *here*. And low neck, of course — well, not *too* low, down to about *here*, you know. . . . Eh? . . . Wait a minute, I didn't get that. . . . Jiggle the thingummy, Mazie, maybe it'll make your voice sound clearer. . . . Yes, now I can hear. . . . *Who?* Did you say you wanted to bring somebody? Why, of *course*. . . . What was that name? . . . Miss Violet Sternberg. Did you say she was Irish? . . . Oh! . . . Why, of *course*, tell her it doesn't make a *bit* of difference about her not having any costume. . . . Yes, just any evening-dress. . . . No, no masks, the costumes will be disguise enough. . . . Eh? . . . *Is* he? oh, wait a minute, I'll have to tell

Jack! [*Turns from telephone.*] Oh, Jack, Dan! Mazie Wright says she knows one of the men that's going to come as a whiskey-bottle!

DILL. [*Reading. Grunts.*] Humph!

HOLT. Full, you mean? [*Blows into flute, trying to play the "Last Rose of Summer."*]

MOLLIE [*Into telephone.*] They think that's great! . . . Eh? . . . Who? . . . As a plumber? Did you say Tom Lowell was coming as a plumber? . . . Well, I'm afraid I won't recognize anybody. . . . Eh? . . . Well, good-bye, see you in a little. . . . Yes, that's all right about Miss Sternberg, we'll be *delighted*. . . . Well, good-bye! . . . Yes. . . . No. . . . Well, good-b— . . . Yes. . . . No. . . . Oh, oh yes, yes. . . . Well, good-bye! [*Hangs up telephone. Rises.*]

HOLT. [*Mimicking.*] Well, good-bye!

MOLLIE. I suppose you'd have rung right off while she was talking! [*Going L. Pauses at end of lounge, and turns. To HOLT, mimicking in her turn.*] Well, good-bye!

DILL. [*Suddenly.*] Say, did you know our neighborhood was getting right into the limelight? Listen to this!

[HOLT breaks off "*The Last Rose of Summer*," listening. MOLLIE standing L. at end of lounge.]

DILL. [*Reads.*] "Daring burglar makes good his escape with booty. Residents along Adams Road, the North Hill, are feeling a little uneasy since the looting of the George B. Mandell residence yesterday afternoon, while a reception was in progress — "

MOLLIE. [*Interrupting in a high voice.*] Mercy, I was *there*! Isn't that awful? How much did he get? When did they find out? Are they on the man's track? Go on, Jack! What are you stopping for?

DILL. [*Grins.*] *You!* [*Reads.*] "The alleged burglar gained entrance by representing himself to be a carpenter sent for to make repairs in an upstairs closet. It is alleged that he looked and acted the part to perfection and got away unsuspected, after having made a clean sweep of much valuable jewelry and silverware. Police allege that methods employed point to 'Kid Sampson,' well-known criminal. Man still at large, but authorities express confidence that they will get him shortly." [*Folds paper up.*]

[*Silence.*]

HOLT. [*Puts flute down on table. Rises. Stands down R. hands in pockets.*] Well, I'll "allege" right here and now that the police and the Mandells and all the rest of them are dead ones! To let any crook get away with as nervy a job as that! Why, the place was full of people! *Some* of them ought to have noticed him.

DILL. I expect the crowd made it easier for him. Nobody knows what's going on in a crowd.

[*MOLLIE starts and looks at him anxiously.*]

HOLT. This town's a back-number anyhow. Why, in lots of other cities not half our size they have detectives around at all the big weddings and receptions and occasions like that. It's only common-sense.

[*MOLLIE abruptly with air of decision goes down L. to telephone. Picks it up and stands listening with resolute expression.*]

[*DILL. U. L. HOLT C. staring at her.*]

MOLLIE [*Into telephone.*] Hello, Exchange! Give me the Police Station, please!

[*Loud ejaculations from DILL. and HOLT together.*] *Hey!*

MOLLIE. [*Turns head and speaks rapidly and energetically.*] Hush, please!

DILL. Here, what're you doing?

MOLLIE. [*Into telephone.*] Yes, I said the nearest Police Station, please! [*Turns head. Same business.*] Please keep quiet, both of you, or I can't hear! [*Lis ens. Speaks into telephone tartly.*] No, there is no trouble here at *all*, no trouble of *any kind*, I merely want the Pol. . . . No, the house is *not* on fire, and I'm not at *all* excited, thank you! If you will kindly attend to your duties. . . . I want the nearest Police Sta. . . . Oh, you want to know where I live? Why, this is Adams Road, the North Hill, there ought to be a Police Station somewhere in our neighborhood, I'm sure we *need* one! . . . Oh, very well. . . . [*Listens.*]

DILL. But, Mollie. . . !
HOLT. I say, Mollie. . . !

} [*Together.*]

MOLLIE. [*Same business.*] Don't interrupt, *please!* I know very well what I'm — [*Turns abruptly to telephone.*] Hello! Oh, is this the Police Sta. . . . Well, is this the — the head man, you know? The one that gives orders, I mean? . . . No, nothing's the matter, I only want you to send a detective out to my house for a party I'm giving this evening. There've been so many awful burglaries right here on our square that I. . . . Oh, why, this is Mr. Dillon speaking, Mr. John Dillon, 2430 Adams Road. I want a detective right away, a nice one, of course. . . . Eh? . . . Why, it's just an evening party, we're going to dance, you know. I want him to be around in a quiet way among the guests, and see that nobody takes anything. . . . Eh?

[*Pantomime of mingled despair and amusement from DILLON and HOLT.*]

MOLLIE. [*Into telephone, after a pause.*] What kind of guests are we going to have? *What kind?* Why, it's very informal, just people we know very well. Everybody's in costume. . . . Fancy-dress, you know. . . . Eh? . . . Why, it will be all right about your man, he doesn't need to wear anything. . . . Eh? . . . [*Severely.*] Whoever that man is that is listening to this conversation and laughing, I will ask him to be so kind as to get off the line. I don't think it's at all nice to. . . . What was that? . . . I said your man could come just as he was without anything on. . . . What was that? . . . Against the law? . . . I can't understand, wait a minute! [*To DILLON, who has made two or three ineffectual attempts to speak to her during the above.*] Well, Jack, what is it?

DILL. Tell him you want a plain-clothes man.

HOLT. And for Heaven's sake, tell him to keep it out of the papers!

MOLLIE. [*Into telephone.*] Hello, are you there? . . . Why, I want a plain-clothes man, *now* do you understand? . . . Yes, right away. . . . Thank you, that's very kind. . . . Yes, I said right away, and please don't put us in the papers, will you? . . . Eh? . . . *Oh!* [*Slams instrument down. To others.*] What do you think he said? He said he wouldn't think of putting us in the papers, the place to put us was the Zoo! [*Going U. L.*] Did you ever *hear* of such impudence?

[DILL. and HOLT exchange glances behind her back.]

MOLLIE. [U. L.] I only hope he'll send us a decent man, or it will spoil everything.

DILL. Well, Mollie, you *would* do it, you know.

HOLT. It's not at all necessary for this little affair.

MOLLIE. [*At door L.*] Oh, it's all very well for you

to talk, but *I'm* not going to have my silver stolen. I'm going to have Norah hide the basket somewhere, and I'll lock up the pantry — [*Looks off R. and suddenly runs back a few steps. Hurriedly, lowering her voice, but with emphasis.*] Jack! Dan! Kathleen's coming! Both of you act as if nothing was going on — about Jim Bryan I mean, you know — just don't pay any attention to her — ask her to dance or something, you know — [*Nods at them significantly, and exit L.*]

[DILL. and HOLT at c.]

HOLT. [*Blankly.*] Nothing's going on! Don't pay any attention to Kathleen, and ask her to dance! [*Rubs back of head thoughtfully.*] Mollie seems to have got her signals mixed. And what was that about Bryan?

DILL. S-sh! [*Stage whisper, melodramatic, looking off R.*] S-sh! There's a name that's never spoken, and a heart that's well-nigh broken. . . . [*Same business.*] . . . And a picture that's turned to the wall! [*Same business.*]

HOLT. Hey? [*Taps him on the side of the head, and jerks hand away with an exclamation of affected pain.*] Ouch! [*Examines hand with pretense of concern.*] Wheels are going now! Nearly got me! [*Shakes fingers, rubs them.*]

DILL. S-sh! [*Grabs HOLT's arm melodramatically, and leads him down L.*]

HOLT. [*Holding back.*] Here, what're doing?

DILL. Sh-sh! Kathleen'll be here in a minute, and then it's all off. [*Whispers.*]

HOLT. [*Drawing away.*] Quit! You're breathing in my ear!

DILL. Well, but you see now how it is about Kathleen. We've got to keep her mind off of Bryan —

HOLT. [*Interrupting.*] I get you! We're the first and second conspirators, and our rôle is ignorance, simplicity and light-hearted mirth. All right! [*Crosses R. and snatches up club, helmet, etc.; assumes swaggering pose down R. facing audience, Sings at top of lungs.*]

"Belave me if all those endearin' young charms —"
[*Out of one side of his mouth in stage whisper.*] Is she coming, Jack?

DILL. [*Down L. has similar business with hat, shillelagh, etc. Glances off R. Stage whisper.*] Yes, she's right here!

HOLT. [*Roaring.*]

"That I gaze on so fondly to-day,
Teedle-rum-tee-tum-tum-tee, I forget the words,
Tra-la-la-dee-di-do-dee-dum-da-da."

DILL. [*At the same time, roaring.*]

"The harp that once thro' Tara's halls
The soul of music shed
Now toodle-doo-ri-tra-la-la
Tee-doodle-dum-dee-da-a-a!"

[*Enter R. KATHLEEN in "fairy" costume, white skirts, spangles, wand, etc. She comes slowly and nonchalantly to C. Idly picks up paper, and sits on arm of chair, glancing over it.*]

DILL. [*Business of turning his head quickly at intervals to watch her. Stops singing suddenly.*] Oh!

HOLT. [*Observing him, same business.*] Hey?

[*Both revolve slowly and silently and stare at her. A pause. KATHLEEN at C. continues reading undisturbed.*
HOLT down R. DILL. down L.]

DILL. Oh, — ah — ahem! [*Coughs, ostentatiously.*]

KATH. [*Raising her eyes with deliberation.*] Oh, is that you, Jack? I didn't know anybody was here. [*Resumes reading.*]

HOLT. [*Same business as DILL.*] Huh — er — ahem!

KATH. [*Same business.*] Ah, Dan, are you there? [*Resumes reading.*]

[*HOLT and DILL. exchange grimace.*]

DILL. Why yes, I'm here and Dan's here and — and we're both here, in fact. I hope we weren't making much noise singing.

KATH. [*Reading, without raising her eyes.*] Eh? Noise? I didn't hear anything.

[*HOLT and DILL. exchange grimace.*]

KATH. [*Reading. Absent-mindedly.*] Go on, if you like, it won't disturb me in the least.

HOLT. Well — um — [*Rubs back of head thoughtfully, crosses L. towards DILL.*]

DILL. Why — ah — [*Same business as HOLT, crossing R. They meet down C.*]

HOLT. [*Nudges DILL. making a gesture with his head towards KATH. Low voice.*] Well? Hey?

DILL. [*Low voice.*] 'S all right! I'll show you how to manage 'em. [*To KATH. Loud, hearty voice.*] Kathleen, that costume is about right. You're a front-row winner. Isn't she, Dan? [*Nudges him.*]

HOLT. [*With unctuous approval.*] Some chicken!

KATH. [*Drops paper; sudden interest.*] Oh, do you really think so? [*Comes down C. Nervously adjusts hair, skirts, etc. Anxiously.*] Do I look nice? Honestly? [*Turns around in front of them.*]

[*HOLT and DILL. exchange winks over her head.*]

DILL. Sure! First-rate!

HOLT. Never looked better in your life!

[Enter NORAH L. with covered basket which she carries as if it were heavy. Crosses back of stage and exit R. unnoticed by the others.]

KATH. [To men, looking from one to the other.] Do you think a man would like me in this? I — I mean, of course, *the* men? *All* the men? Do you think they'll think I look all right?

HOLT. Can't help themselves!

DILL. Well, you suit *me*!

KATH. Oh, I *am* so glad! [Walks U. c.]

DILL. [To HOLT triumphant.] Told you so! Maybe I don't know how to manage 'em!

HOLT. [Dubious.] Yeah, but look at her *now*!

[KATH. U. c. with paper, same business as before.]

DILL. [Discomfited.] Humph! [Recovering, to HOLT.] 'S all right! I'll show you! [To KATH.] Oh — ah — Kathleen, don't you want to go over your dance once more before they all get here?

KATH. [Reading. Former manner, absent and cool.] Dance? My dance? Oh no, I think not.

[DILL. and HOLT exchange a glance. HOLT grinning.]

HOLT. [Low voice.] Oh yes, you know how to manage 'em! You're the greatest little manager ever! [Goes to table R. Business of lighting cigarette. Sits.]

DILL. [Persuasively.] Well, I wish you would, Kathleen. I'd like to see you. [Pauses. Considers.] I'd like to see if there isn't some little touch you could put in the *men* will like, you know.

KATH. [Drops paper. Sudden animation as before.] Oh, Jack, that's awfully nice of you! I would so love to do it so as to please a man — I mean *the* men, you know, *all* the men! [Comes down c. excited.] Put the

chairs back, there'll be space enough right here.
[Stops.] Oh, but what about the music?

HOLT. [Rises.] Music's all right. I'll play —

DILL. [Interrupting.] No, you won't! You won't play that flute. Not if I know it!

HOLT. [Going up R. Smoking.] Who said flute, you old Oola-boola, you? I meant I'd run the Victrola.
[Exit R. behind palms.]

[DILL. sits L. down. KATH. stands C.]

HOLT. [Appearing for an instant in doorway.] All ready?

DILL. Ready, Kathleen? [Calls.] All right, Dan, shoot!

[Music. KATHLEEN dances. Just before close of dance, enter Norah L. and comes down to DILL.]

DILL. [At finish, clapping hands.] Fine, Kathleen, great! [To NORAH.] What is it?

NORAH. Av ye plaze, Misther Dillon, there's a man wantin' to see yez.

DILL. [Puzzled.] A man to see me? What does he want?

NORAH. I don't know, sir, he said yez sint for him.

DILL. [Astonished.] I sent for him? [Sudden recollection. Rises.] Oh, it must be Mollie's detective. [To NORAH.] All right, tell him I'll come directly.

[Exit NORAH L.]

[KATH. stands leaning against table R. watching DILL. closely.]

DILL. [Crosses R. to table, business of selecting cigarette. Returns slowly to C.] Dance is great, Kathleen.

KATH. [R. watching him.] Norah said the man was waiting for you, Jack.

DILL. [Leisurely.] Oh, he's all right! Say [Chuckles.]

you didn't hear about that. Mollie pretty nearly went into hysterics over this burglar-scare, and insisted on telephoning for a detec — ha, ha! — a detective — ha, ha, ha!

KATH. [*Nervously, forcing a laugh.*] Ha, ha! But the man's waiting, Jack. Hadn't you better go?

DILL. [*Indifferently. Smoking.*] In a minute. Say [*Chuckles.*] you ought to have heard Mollie telephoning the Police Station! [*Shakes head in a fit of chuckles.*] Said she wanted a nice one — ha, ha, ha! A nice one!

KATH. [*Impatient.*] Well, do go and see the man anyhow, Jack. Everybody will be getting here presently. [*Motor-horn heard distantly off.*] There, they're beginning to come now! [*Stamps foot.*] Will you go?

DILL. [*Checking laughter, surprised.*] All right, Kathleen, I'm going. [*Saunters u. l.*] Why, you're as nervous as Mollie this evening! [*At door l.*] A nice one, you know, that's what she wanted, without — ha, ha, ha! — without anything on! [*Exit l. laughing.*]

[KATH. watches him off, then dashes l. to telephone. Just as she seizes it, HOLT appears at door r.]

HOLT. [*Calls.*] All through? Or do you want to try it again?

KATH. Oh! [*Drops telephone, and rushes back to table r. Sits, out of breath.*]

[*Enter HOLT at door r.*]

HOLT. Hey? Did you say yes or no?

KATH. [*Swallowing and breathing rapidly.*] No! I said no! I don't want it again, thank you, Dan.

HOLT. [*Coming down c. Glances at her.*] I shouldn't think you would. You're all out of breath. Why, where's Jack?

KATH. He's gone. Somebody wanted him.

HOLT. [*Stands L. in front of fireplace. Confidential.*] Isn't old Jack funny about my flute? He can't bear the idea of my learning to play it.

KATH. He says he wouldn't mind your *learning*. He says what he can't stand is your *playing*.

HOLT. [*Huffy.*] Oh, he can't, can't he? Jack has about as much ear for music as a rhinoceros. [*Looking around.*] Where did I put it anyhow, did you notice?

KATH. [*With a quick movement, slips flute off of table and hides it under her skirt. Innocently.*] Put what?

HOLT. [*Coming down L. beginning to search.*] My flute just now. I laid it down somewhere. [*Crosses R. Looks on table.*]

KATH. Oh, *did* you?

HOLT. I thought I put it here. Maybe it's rolled off. [*Looks under table. Straightens up.*] No. Now *where* do you suppose — ? [*Starts off on a tour of the room, business of searching everywhere as before.*]

[KATH. *business of watching him, screwing her head as far around as it will go without moving her body, first to right, then to left.*]

HOLT. [*Reaches door L. Shakes head with a negative grunt.*] Ump! Not here!

KATH. Maybe Norah's taken it. She was here.

HOLT. That's so! Norah's always picking it up around the house and bringing it to me —

KATH. [*Mimics.*] "Av ye plaze, Misther Holt, here's yer flute!"

HOLT. Then I give her a quarter. Great graft!

KATH. [*Eagerly.*] Why don't you go and ask her? She's in the kitchen. Why don't you?

HOLT. Maybe I had better.

KATH. [*Excitedly. Jumps up, holding flute behind*

her.] That's it, Dan! Ask Norah, go right away and ask her! *Hurry, Dan! Why don't you hurry?*

HOLT. [Going L.] Why, I *am* going as fast as I can. What's your hurry?

[KATH. *watches him off. Drops flute on floor, runs to telephone, same business as before. Stands L. clutching instrument. Looks warily all around the room. Puts telephone to ear. Pause. Into telephone, low voice.*] I want North one-eight-double o, please. . . . Yes. . . . [Pause. *Glances all around the room.*] [Into telephone, low voice.] Is that Mr. Bryan's res — [Rapturously.] Oh, Jim! Oh, you can't think how glad I am! To hear your voice again, I mean. . . . [Listens smiling.] . . . Oh, hasn't it been ages, though? at least three hours, since long before dinner. . . . Well, you know, I *couldn't*. The house is simply *jammed* with people. . . . No, nobody's come yet, I meant there was always somebody around. . . . [Listens smiling. Suddenly.] Jim, *don't!* I'm afraid somebody will hear you! . . . Why, I'm all right, only I'm almost *dead*. . . . No, nothing's the matter, just *everything*, you know. . . . Why, I can't *help* being frightened when I think of what we are going to do. . . . No, no, I'm not frightened when I'm with you, but . . . [Listens, rapt expression. Suddenly.] Jim, *don't!* I know somebody will hear. . . . No, I don't believe anybody suspects anything. I've had the most awful time all day long, trying to be *natural*. I never knew before how hard stage people must have to work —

[Automobile horn heard off.]

KATH. Oh! [Jumps violently. Into telephone.] Nothing, only I think they're beginning to come. . . . Quick, Jim! . . . [Listens, excitedly nodding head.]

Yes. . . . Yes. . . . Twelve o'clock sharp, yes! . . .
[Suddenly, emphatic.] No, no, not that door, Jim, that
wouldn't be safe. Listen. . . .

[Automobile horn heard off.]

KATH. Oh! [Same business.] Gracious, there's another! [Into telephone rapidly, lowering voice.] Nothing, never mind what you hear me say, just listen. The terrace-door. . . . Can you hear me? . . . Yes, the terrace-door, they'll all be at supper, so there won't be anybody in here or outside either —

[Automobile horn heard off.]

KATH. Oh! [Same business.] [Into telephone.] No, I didn't say anything, I just said. . . . Yes, they're beginning to come. . . . Listen, Jim, so you'll be sure it's me, I'll carry one of the lights back and forth across the window *three* times. . . . [The last words in a rush as fast as she can say them.] Yes, *three* times, remember. . . . Yes. . . . Oh, Jim, I'm so frightened. . . . No. . . . Yes. . . . Jim, *don't!* [Claps telephone on table and turns around. Business of straightening hair and dress, trembling excitedly.]

[Enter R. DILLON and AMES. DILL. carrying large covered basket like that which NORAH was seen carrying before.]

DILL. [Speaks as they enter.] This is the living-room as you see. [Makes gesture towards glass doors c.] There's a terrace right outside there. [Comes down c. Deposits basket on floor under table carefully.] [Speaks in a business-like voice as he sets basket down.] I believe I've showed you everything now, Mr. Ames. Do you think you can find your way about the house?

[Automobile horn heard off.]

AMES. [Stands c. hands in pockets, staring sharply

around room, chewing unlighted cigar.] Sure! [*Eyes light on KATH. Stares hard.*]

DILL. Our people are beginning to come. [*Suggestively.*] You — you know of course where will be the best place for you to be?

AMES. You should worry. [*Stares at KATH. who moves restlessly.*]

DILL. [*Uncomfortable.*] Well — um — we'll probably receive in here, Mr. Ames. I — er — I don't suppose you — er — you want to stay *here*, do you?

AMES. [*Grins.*] No, I don't *want* to, Cap. I'm *paid* to. [*Good-naturedly.*] Look here, you just run along and have a good time. There ain't any of your folks going to stub their toe on *me*. I gotta see *them*, of course, but they ain't gotta see *me*, huh? [*Comes down c. facing DILL.*] Say — ? [*Jerks head and one thumb towards KATH.*]

DILL. [*Puzzled.*] Hey? [*Glances from AMES to KATH. Comprehends.*] [*Stiffly.*] The young lady is our guest, Miss Travers. [*Briefly to KATH.*] Mr. Ames, the detective.

[*Automobile horn heard off.*]

KATH. [*Nods, murmuring inarticulately.*]

AMES. Pleased to meet you, Miss.

[*Pause during which AMES stares at KATH. who moves uneasily.*]

KATH. [*Nervous laugh.*] What on earth were you carrying in that big basket like a market-woman, Jack?

DILL. That? That's the silver. It was standing on the table in the back hall, so I just brought it in here. It may as well stay here under the table, that's as safe a place as any, don't you think, Mr. Ames?

AMES. [*Glancing at it casually.*] Yeah.

KATH. Is it all there?

DILL. Oh, I didn't open it. We haven't any time to be counting forks and spoons *now*, you know. But I expect most of it's there, it's heavy enough.

[*Automobile horn heard off.*]

DILL. [*Fidgetting.*] They'll all be here in a minute. Er — ah — I suppose you want to meet my wife, Mr. Ames? So that you can tell her from the rest, eh? She's somewhere around — we can go and hunt her up — ? [*Suggestively.*]

AMES. [*Familiar.*] Keep it on, brother, keep it on! No hurry! I don't claim to be any Sherlock Holmes, but I guess I can *de-duce* which one Mrs. Dillon is when I see her.

KATH. [*Beginning to be amused.*] Can you really? I should love to see you! Deduce something about us right now, won't you?

AMES. [*Eyeing her coolly.*] All right, young lady.

[KATH. L., AMES C., DILL. R. *Slight pause during which AMES takes cigar from one corner of his mouth, looks it over, puts it back in other corner.*]

AMES. [*Abruptly to KATH.*] You're hiding something.

KATH. [*Aghast. Violent start.*] Wh-what!

AMES. [*Dryly to DILL. repeating gesture towards KATH.*] Huh? How about it?

DILL. [*Amused but surprised.*] Why, Kathleen, you're not really?

KATH. [*Completely at a loss.*] I — I — I —

AMES. [*Benevolent.*] Never mind, tain't any of our business, I guess. [*To DILL.*] Say, Mister, you can get a woman with that "hiding something" stuff every time! Because why? [*Same business with cigar.*] Because they always *are* hiding something!

DILL. [*Distantly.*] Really? [*Looks at KATH. perplexed.*]

KATH. [*Same business.*] I — I — I —

[AMES at c. hands in pockets, eyes her grinning.]

DILL. [*Disturbed.*] Oh, come now, Kathleen, you haven't got anything to make a secret of.

KATH. Why no — of course not — no indeed! [*Pause. Desperately.*] That is — yes — I — I was hiding something — I was hiding — I was hiding — [*Sudden idea.*] I was hiding Dan's flute. [*Relieved. Voluble.*] Yes, that's it, Jack, I was hiding Dan's flute, I didn't want to tell, I was so afraid you'd give it away, but I did it just for a joke, you know, of course, and I don't want him to find it to-night, because I — I — [*Stops completely out of breath.*]

DILL. *What? Dan's flute? You've hidden Dan's flute?* [*Amused.*] Good work! Where?

KATH. [*Blankly.*] Where?

AMES. [*Grinning. Same business with cigar.*] Uh-huh. *Where?*

DILL. Where did you put it, I mean?

KATH. Why, I put it — [*Pause.*] — I put it — [*Pause.*] — I — I put it —

AMES. [*Grinning.*] That's it, sister, you put it, didn't you? [*To DILL.*] Don't you see, Cap? She put it. Get that?

DILL. [*A little impatient.*] Oh go on! Let me in, Kathleen.

KATH. [*Defiant.*] I'm not going to tell!

AMES. [*Winking at her.*] Well, in that case, I am. Looks to me like that was a flute lying over there on the floor by the table, ain't it?

KATH. [*Slight scream.*] Where? Oh! [*Rushes across R. and snatches up flute.*]

DILL. [*Following her.*] Under the table? That's not a very good place. Here, let's see! [*Takes flute from her, and stands down R. holding it, and looking around, back to audience.*]

[KATH. *leans against table R. still excited.* AMES *strolls deliberately over towards her, and looking down, closes one eye.*]

KATH. [*Recoiling. Indignant and frightened.*] Oh!

DILL. [*Turning.*] Hey?

AMES. [*Cool.*] Nothing, mister, nothing. [*Saunters U. C. business of staring all around, stops at terrace-doors, tries them and finds them unlocked, opens one and glances out, shuts it and exit L. sauntering.*]

DILL. [*Standing down R. flute in hand. Sudden idea.*] Tell you what, Kathleen, we'll stick it in the silver basket. He'll never think of looking for it there. [*Lifts up lid of basket just enough to admit flute and thrusts it in.*] There! [*Claps lid down and shoves basket under table. To KATH. dusting off hands triumphantly.*] How's that?

KATH. [*Exaggerated enthusiasm.*] Fine, Jack!

[*Automobile horns heard off. Enter hurriedly L. HOLT.*]

HOLT. [*Pausing U. C. adjusting helmet, white cotton gloves, etc.*] Hello, they're all getting here. [*To DILL.*] Who's the low-brow I met in the hall just now?

DILL. That's Mollie's sleuth that she ordered to protect us, you know. Where's your flute, Dan?

HOLT. [*Going R. Speaks hastily over shoulder.*] Don't know. Can't find it. Here come the Wrights. [*Exit R.*]
[*Voices heard off R.*]

[*Enter L. MOLLIE in peasant-girl costume. Comes has-*

tily down c.] Oh, Jack, better stand here with me, hadn't you? [*To KATH.*] You can be just *around*, you know. It oughtn't to be a bit formal.

DILL. Did you see your detective?

MOLLIE. [*Gesture.*] I *did*! He seems to know enough to keep himself in the background, though.

[*Voices and laughter heard off R.* DILL. and MOLLIE *side by side in front of fireplace L.* KATH. *U. C.*]

[*Enter R.* MRS. WRIGHT *in nursemaid's dress with a large baby-doll decorated with green ribbons.* WRIGHT *in evening-clothes but with a blazing fancy waistcoat, two glass door-knobs in his shirt-front as studs, high hat, violent lobster-red gloves, etc.* MISS STERNBERG *in décolleté toilette.*]

WRIGHT. Hello, Jack! Mrs. Dillon! [*Takes off hat to her with a flourish.*]

[DILL., MOLLIE, *others, business of greetings, showing off costumes, etc.*]

MRS. W. [*To MOLLIE.*] Mollie, you look perfectly *darling*! Don't you think this is rather cute? [*Parades costume.*] Look, you can make the baby cry. [*Shows off doll, prodding its stomach.*] Oh, I forgot! Our guest, Miss Sternberg. Violet, Mrs. Jack Dillon.

[*Business of introductions.*]

DILL. [*To WRIGHT.*] What are you supposed to be anyhow, old man?

WRI. Me? Why, I'm the boss of the Umpty-Steenth Ward. Pipe my diamond shirt-studs? [*Displays glass knobs.*] [*To KATH.*] What do you think of it? [*Turns around in front of her.*]

KATH. Lovely! Are ward bosses always Irish, though?

WRI. Sure! Well, a good many of 'em are neutral.

[DILL. at c. KATH., WRIGHT *business of talking together.*]

[MOLLIE, MRS. WRI., MISS S. *down L.*]

MISS S. [*To MOLLIE.*] So sweet of you, Mrs. Dillon, to let me come without any costume. I just got here to-day, and wasn't prepared for anything like this.

MOLLIE. Why, we're *delighted* to have you. This your first visit here?

MRS. W. Yes, and I'm so afraid she's going to have an awful time remembering the people she meets.

MOLLIE. It *is* hard for a stranger.

MRS. W. Everybody in these costumes too! Why, we can't even recognize one another!

MISS S. I hope you'll all forgive my mistakes. [*To MRS. W.*] Who was the man in the sweater you spoke to just as we came in?

MRS. W. A sweater? Oh, that was Mr. Lowell — Tom Lowell. [*To MOLLIE.*] You ought to see him. He's gotten up to look *exactly* like a plumber — simply *rich*. He has one of those carpet-rolls of tools that they all carry, and his face painted to look as if he hadn't shaved for a week, and talks with the strongest kind of brogue the *whole* time. Really he's wonderfully good.

DILL. [*At c.*] Look who's here! Saint Patrick himself, no less!

[*Enter R. Saint Patrick, the banshee, the Tammany Tiger, the whiskey-bottle, Happy Hooligan, Gloomy Gus, etc. Voices, laughter heard off R.*]

MOLLIE. [*To MRS. W.*] Who is it, do you know?

MRS. W. The one with the tiger-skin rug, you mean? Why, that's Joe King, don't you recognize him? I think it's one of the Cooper girls dressed like a ghost.

[*Business of greetings, introductions, etc.*]

MOLLIE. [To Miss S.] Miss Sternberg, may I present Saint Patrick?

MISS S. Otherwise — ?

MOLLIE. Otherwise Mr. Cooper.

MISS S. Mr. Cooper. [*Rather coquettish.*] Don't be furious if I call you the wrong name, *will* you? Of course I couldn't forget your face, but names are so difficult.

[Miss S., Saint Patrick, others business of talking together. Other guests in costume enter, pixies, old women, dragoons, horse-jockeys, etc. Music begins off R.]

[Enter R. LOWELL dressed as described, sweater, soiled trousers, heavy brogans, shabby slouch hat, roll of tools on shoulder, etc.]

ALL. Ah-h! [*Burlesque applause, clapping of hands, etc.*]

LOW. [Coming down c. To DILLON.] Av ye plaze, sor, is this Misther Dillon's? [*Attitude.*]

DILL. [*Looking him over.*] Great stuff, Tom!

WRI. [*Taking LOWELL's arm.*] Here, I want you to meet Miss Sternberg.

[*Business of introductions. Enter more guests. Music off. Talk. Exeunt couples for dancing. Enter HOLT and takes KATHLEEN off R. WRIGHT pairs with MOLLIE, DILLON with MRS. W., etc. Miss S. and LOWELL left down c. last of all.*]

LOW. I'm sure, miss, it's very kind of Misther Wright to lave me have the first dance with yez.

MISS S. [*Rather gushing.*] Oh, Mr. Lowell, you are perfectly wonderful! I don't see *how* you can keep up the character that way.

LOW. [*Superior.*] Arrah thin, 'tis aisy whin yez have

got the thrick av it. [*Looks around.*] I'm thinkin' I'd betther lave me tools here. [*Deposits roll of tools on lounge L. Returning, speaks without brogue in his natural manner.*] It's about as much as I can do to get through one of these dances without walking all over my partner, let alone carrying all that junk. Do you trot, Miss Sternberg?

Miss S. *There!* You forgot it for once!

Low. Forgot what?

Miss S. Your Irish!

Low. [*Sudden recollection.*] Bedad, so I did!

Miss S. You won't mind if I stare at you very hard?
[*Takes his arm. Going R.*] It's so queer not to know anybody —

[*Exeunt R. talking. A pause. Music and voices heard off R. during all these scenes.*]

[*Enter L. NORAH followed by MIKE MURPHY with plumber's kit, etc. They advance with extreme caution to U. C. Pantomime of NORAH showing off ball-room and dancers to MIKE who stands and stares.*]

NORAH. [*After a pause.*] Well?

MIKE. [*Shakes head solemnly, continuing to stare.*] Ye'd think they was paid to do it, now wouldn't yez?

NORAH. [*Superior.*] That's because you don't know anythin' about it, Mike.

MIKE. [*With emphasis.*] Glory be, I don't! What have they got on all thim quare-lookin' clothes for?

NORAH. It's a fancy-dthress party. They're all dthressed up to look like somebody else, purposely, except that one. [*Points.*] That's a young la-ady visitin' here. She has on full dthress.

MIKE. [*Cranes to look.*] Full dthress! They call that full dthress? [*Advances a step, and gazes with great in-*

terest.] *[To NORAH.]* What's it loike whin she takes a ba-ath, thin?

NORAH. *[Shocked.]* Mike!

MIKE. *[Same business.]* Arre they anny more av thim loike that?

NORAH. *[Tartly.]* No, and you'd best be gettin' on yer job, Mike Murphy, instead of standin' here starin' yer eyes out. *[Pulls him back.]* Mind yez don't make anny noise about it either.

MIKE. *[Reluctant, still gazing towards ball-room.]* There ain't anny pipes in beyant that wants lookin' afther, I dinnaw? *[Gesture with his thumb towards ball-room.]*

NORAH. *[In a temper.]* Av coorse not! I told yez the leak was *here*, right over the door. *[Going L. towing him after her.]* S-sh! Can't yez step lighter?

MIKE. *[Expostulating.]* I am steppin' light.

NORAH. S-sh! *[Exit L.]*

[MIKE at door L. pauses, looking up, pushes hat back and studies the ceiling.]

NORAH. *[Reappearing in doorway.]* Arre yez comin' or arre yez not?

MIKE *[Business-like.]* Is that where the trouble is at? *[Gestures.]* That wet spot in the ceiling?

NORAH. *[Looking up.]* Ain't that what I've been tellin' yez? It's Mrs. Dillon's bathroom. S-sh!

[Exeunt L.]

[A pause. Music ceases. Applause, voices, laughter off R. Enter R. MOLLIE with WRIGHT.]

WRI. *[Speaking as they come down c.]* I take two side-steps, you know.

MOLLIE. Kathleen dances it your way, too.

WRI. She dances well, doesn't she?

MOLLIE. Yes, she's going to do us a fancy one after supper to-night. We thought it would be fun to have a few stunts like that.

[*They stand together at table R. Business of talking.*]

[*Enter R. LOWELL and MISS STERNBERG. Business of LOW. taking leave of her. MISS S. crosses L. sits on lounge.*]

[*Enter R. HOLT. Looks around. Comes down c.*]

HOLT. Oh, Mollie, don't you want to do this one with me?

MOLLIE. All right, Dan. [*Going. To WRIGHT.*] Aren't you going to ask Miss Sternberg? She's all alone over there.

[*Music recommences off R. MOLLIE and HOLT go U. C. and exeunt R. talking. WRI. crosses L. to MISS S.*]

WRI. Won't you give me this one?

MISS S. Why, I'm just waiting here for Mr. Lowell. He's gone to get me a glass of water. We thought we'd sit out.

WRI. The next, then?

MISS S. Oh, I'd love to, Mr. Wright.

[*Exit WRI. R.*]

[*MISS S. comes down to table R. and stands facing audience. Business of opening vanity-case, inspecting hair and face in little mirror, dabbing on powder, etc.*]

[*Enter L. MIKE. Shuts door with care, stepping softly, backs off studying ceiling. Stumbles. Recovers with ejaculation.*]

MIKE. [*U. C. rubbing shin.*] The devil!

MISS S. [*Faint scream. Turns around.*] Oh!

[*A pause, during which they stare at each other.*]

MISS S. [*Relieved.*] Oh, it's you!

MIKE. [*Confused.*] Yes, ma'am.

MISS S. You must have come in very quietly.

MIKE. [*Recovering. Civil.*] I thried to, ma'am.

MISS S. You startled me. You see I didn't know it was you.

MIKE. [*Puzzled.*] I didn't know I was you either, ma'am.

MISS S. [*Vivacious.*] Oh, you are simply delicious!

MIKE. [*Astounded.*] Ma'am?

MISS S. It's *marvellous* how you stick to the Irish!

MIKE. [*Astonished and a little nettled.*] Why wouldn't I, thin?

MISS S. It must be so difficult too.

MIKE. [*Loud, clenching fist.*] Phwat?

MISS S. [*Sits on edge of table in dashing attitude.*] You didn't see about the water for me after all. [*Coquettishly severe.*] Careless man!

MIKE. [*Anxious to explain.*] I will directly, ma'am. I ain't found out where it's comin' from yet.

MISS S. Haven't you? Well, do you know, it's too absurd, but there was water right here on the table all the time and neither one of us saw it! [*Takes siphon and pours out a glass.*] Here's looking towards you! [*Drinks, eyeing him flirtatiously over the edge of the glass.*]

[MISS S. sitting on table R. MIKE L. standing. He stares at her thoughtfully, rubbing his chin; pushes hat to one side and rubs head still staring; apparently comes to some decision, shrugs, cocks hat, strolls over to her and stands, hands in pockets, staring boldly, grinning.]

MISS S. [*Finishing drink.*] You don't believe in drinking healths?

MIKE. [*Cool.*] Not in that stuff I don't.

MISS S. There's something stronger here. [*Looks*

over tray with whiskey-bottle, etc.] Oh, there's only this one glass! What will you do?

MIKE. [*Eyeing her flirtatiously.*] Can't we dthrink out of the wan glass, the two av us? I wouldn't mind.

MISS S. Oh, shocking! I've never learned to drink whiskey anyhow.

MIKE. No throuble at all for me to tache yez.

MISS S. I'm beginning to be afraid of you. [*Takes up bottle and glass. Eyes him coquettishly sidelong.*] Say when! [*Pours.*]

[*MIKE watches silently. MISS S. pours a little, pauses, looks at him expectantly; pours again; same business; pours again; same business; takes a long breath and sets bottle down, staring at him.*]

MISS. S. Well, what are you thinking of?

MIKE. [*Takes glass from her. Bows with a flourish. Drinks.*] Begobs, I was thinkin' — [*Drinks.*] — that yez was all lunny — [*Drinks.*] — but sometimes yez have what they do be callin' — [*Drinks.*] — lucid intervals! [*Slaps glass on table, smacking his lips. Eyes her boldly, edging nearer.*]

MISS S. [*Slips off of table, a little uneasy.*] You are wonderful! Anybody would think you were just what you seem. I mean just a — just a man, you know.

MIKE. A man? To be sure I'm a man. What did yez take me for? Docthor Mary Walker?

[*Pours out another drink.*]

MISS S. [*Moving down L. increased uneasiness. Watching him.*] Of course your dress helps.

MIKE. Helps, is it? Yours might — [*Eyes her; drinks; shakes head.*] But it don't! [*Drinks.*]

MISS S. I mean it's not having any collar on. That makes such a difference in a man's looks somehow.

MIKE. [*Sets glass down; eyes her.*] Bedad, a collar'd make mighty little difference in *your* looks, ma'am. [*Moves towards her grinning.*]

MISS S. [*Retreating towards telephone-table, half frightened and half pleased.*] I *knew* I was going to be afraid of you! [*Springing back.*] Don't!

MIKE. That ain't me na-ame. I've heard a lot about that same Misther *Don't*, the gurrlls arre always callin' for him.

MISS S. [*Takes refuge behind telephone-table.*] Oh, please do — !

MIKE. [*Pursues her.*] *Do's* bettther —

MISS S. But somebody's coming!

[*Music ceases. Burst of applause, laughter, voices heard off R. Enter R. MOLLIE and CARSON, the latter dressed as an ordinary workingman, overalls, blue shirt, dinner-pail, etc. They come slowly down c. Business of talking together. Miss S. drops into chair L. MIKE goes up L. to fireplace.*]

MOLLIE. [*At c. glancing around.*] Oh, here they are! [*To Miss S.*] This is Mr. Carson, Miss Sternberg.

[*Business of introductions.*]

MISS S. [*Rises.*] What are you, Mr. Carson? Mr. Lowell's a plumber, you know.

CARSON. Oh, I guess I'm just another Irishman, only I can't do the brogue like Lowell. [*Music begins.*] Do you hesitate?

MISS S. Yes, but that's a one-step, isn't it?

CAR. [*Offering arm.*] Let's go and find out.

[*Business of talking together as exeunt R.*]

MOLLIE. [*Down c. Turns towards MIKE.*] Were you sitting out *both* dances with her, Tom? She must

be violently fascinating. [*Strolls up L. towards him. Halts abruptly. Slight scream.*] *Oh! Who is it?*

MIKE. [*Embarrassed, respectful, removing hat.*] It's me, ma'am, it's the plumber, plaze ma'am.

[*MIKE and MOLLIE near fireplace. MIKE awkwardly fingering hat, MOLLIE staring at him. Enter noiselessly L. AMES. Looks at them, crosses R. quickly and stealthily, and hides behind palms. Business of watching them closely.*]

MOLLIE. [*Relieved.*] Oh, the plumber! I took you for somebody else at first. Norah said you'd come. Did you find where the leak was? [*Goes up L. followed respectfully by MIKE. Business of talking over the spot on the ceiling with him.*]

DILL. [*Appears in door R. Calls.*] Mollie!

MOLLIE. All right, Jack, in a minute. [*To MIKE.*] Well, fix it the best you can anyhow. [*Crosses R. to DILL.*] What is it?

DILL. Why, don't you think it's about time for supper?

[*Exeunt R. talking.*]

[*MIKE at door L. opens door, and looks off standing on threshold. Returns into room, surveys ceiling and wall on that side of the room, shakes head, rubs chin, casting occasional cautious glances towards ball-room. Exit, closing door with extreme gentleness.*]

[*AMES business of watching him closely, shrinking behind palms whenever MIKE turns in his direction. As door closes, AMES emerges briskly but cautiously, crosses L., listens at door an instant, opens it and peers out, exit, closing door gently.*]

[*A pause. Music ceases off. Applause, voices, etc. Music recommences. Enter stealthily by doors C. KID*

SAMPSON. *Stands looking warily left and right, revolver in hand. After an instant, turns, closes doors noiselessly, looks all over door frame and wall on either hand, finds electric-light switch, and presses button, turning his head to observe effect. All lights go out except reading-lamps on tables R. and L. SAMPSON puts revolver in pocket, crosses L. Stops abruptly, business of watching and listening. During all the following scene music and subdued noises off R.]*

[*Enter R. DILL. Comes down R. Business of searching table. SAMPSON with hand on revolver rigidly watching him.*]

DILL. [*Glances at him and continues search.*] Hello, Tom, is that you? Somebody said you were in the dressing-room. Want a smoke?

SAMP. [*After an instant, relaxing perceptibly, but still vigilant.*] Oh, I — I don't care.

DILL. All right, just wait a minute till I find the goods. [*Looks up and around.*] By Jove, I thought something was wrong! The lights are all out. When did that happen?

SAMP. Just a minute ago.

DILL. Burnt out the switch, I expect. See if you can turn 'em on, Tom, will you? The button's right over there by the terrace-door. It's so dark in here I can scarcely see. [*Continues search.*]

[*SAMPSON hesitates, then goes U. C. to doors. Stands with eyes on DILLON watchful.*]

DILL. [*Discovers cigarettes, etc.*] Ah-ha, here they are! [*Turns head.*] Can't you find it? Feel on the right-hand side.

SAMP. I did, but she won't work.

DILL. Oh, well, never mind. It's all right as long

as they don't go out in the rest of the house. Have one of these?

SAMP. [*Comes down c. a little way but halts while still in shadow.*] I — I got some of my own.

DILL. [*Business of lighting cigarette, speaking as he does so.*] Oh, all right. [*Sits on arm of chair R. arms folded, legs stretched out, smoking.*] Say, Tom, you know that get-up of yours is great. It's the best costume for a fancy-dress party like this I ever saw. Where did you get it?

SAMP. [*Watching him as before, sits on arm of lounge L., copying DILLON's attitude.*] Why, I — er — I got it — [*Coughs.*] — Ungh-ungh!

DILL. The plumber's outfit, I mean.

SAMP. Oh — er — I borrowed it.

DILL. Congratulations! It's a success. Nobody'd know you.

SAMP. [*Slight involuntary chuckle.*] Well, I don't want 'em to know me.

DILL. I notice you manage to give a little different sound to your voice even.

SAMP. Yep! [*Coughs.*] Ungh — ungh!

DILL. You ought to look out for that cold, Tom. You're pretty hoarse.

[*A pause. SAMPSON looking uneasily around.*]

DILL. We were thinking that we'd get a few of you that *could* to do some stunts after supper this evening. [*Tentative.*] I don't suppose you feel like singing?

SAMP. [*With emphasis.*] You bet I don't.

DILL. Not with that cold, of course. [*Pause. Suddenly slaps his leg and bursts out laughing.*] By Jove, I forgot — Ho — ho — ha!

SAMP. [*Violent start, looking around suspiciously.*] Huh?

DILL. [*Still chuckling.*] Say, Tom, what d'ye think? Dan Holt was going to play something on his flute — his *flute*, you know. [*Laughter at every other word.*] You knew about Dan thinking he can play the flute? [*Same business.*] Well, what d'ye think — ? [*Same business.*]

SAMP. [*Increasing uneasiness.*] I — I — er — ungh! [*Coughs.*]

[*Enter L. NORAH. Crosses up-stage, preoccupied air, stops at door R., business of looking into ball-room, seeking for someone. Exit R.*]

SAMP. [*Violent start, clutching for revolver as she enters, watches her anxiously.*] Huh?

DILL. [*Glancing.*] There goes one of the maids now, looking for my wife, I guess. [*Rises.*] Supper must be about ready. [*Looks at watch.*] It's nearly twelve. But say, I started to tell you about Dan's flute. See that basket under the table? Right there? See it?

SAMP. [*On pins and needles, looking all around. Shortly.*] Yep, I see it.

DILL. Don't give it away. That's our silver —

SAMP. [*Violent start. Loud voice.*] Huh?

DILL. S-sh! I don't wonder you're surprised. Mrs. Dillon got all worked up over this burglar-scare, so I brought all our stuff in here where it would be safe. But what I was going to tell you was that I hid Dan's flute in there with it — [*Laughter; same business as before.*] See? [*Laughter.*]

SAMP. Yep, I see. [*Suddenly joining in laughter.*] Ho-ha-ha!

DILL. Dan'll never find it in the world, you know.
[*Same business.*]

SAMP. Sure, he won't! [*Same business.*]

DILL. That settles the flute solo, hey? [*Same business.*]

SAMP. It does for fair! [*Same business.*]

DILL. Laugh's on Dan. [*Same business for both.*]

[*Music ceases. Applause, laughter, voices off R.*]

[*Enter R. MOLLIE and NORAH, business of conferring together. NORAH crosses up-stage, busy and preoccupied air as before. Exit L.*]

[*SAMPSON and DILLON at c. SAMP. stops laughing abruptly. Watches MOLLIE and NORAH anxiously.*]

MOLLIE. [U. R. *Calls.*] Jack, are you there?

DILL. [*Going up.*] All right, Mollie. [*To SAMPSON.*]
Nobody knows, so don't give it away.

[*DILL. joins MOLLIE at door R. Business of talking together, gradually withdrawing off R.*]

[*Music recommences. SAMPSON alone. Looks sharply all around, hand on revolver. Rushes down R. snatches up basket of silver, weighs it an instant in his hand, nods in a satisfied manner, runs U. C. Business of halting at door c. surveying place warily, opens door a crack, peers out cautiously. Exit.*]

[*Enter R. MOLLIE and DILLON. Come down c. talking.*]

MOLLIE. Well, I don't know how we are to manage. The china-pantry is locked and I can't for my life remember where I put the key, and Norah just came and told me we'd only about half enough of those tin plates and cups and things I ordered.

DILL. Oh, it doesn't matter for a party like this. Let 'em eat with their fingers, and pretend it's a picnic. It'll be just that much more fun.

MOLLIE. I told her to get some of the pie-pans out of the kitchen. [*Goes u. c. looking around.*] You might get down some of your steins for them to drink out of, Jack. Why, the lights are all out!

DILL. [*Business of collecting steins, mugs, etc., from shelves, mantel, etc.*] Yes, something's wrong, they won't turn on.

[*Enter R. HOLT.*]

MOLLIE. [*At doors c. Presses button.*] Why yes, they will too. Look at that!

[*Lights all on.*]

HOLT. See here, Mollie, I've got to have my flute presently. Haven't you seen it anywhere?

MOLLIE. [*Impatient.*] No, I haven't, Dan, and I haven't any time to be looking for flutes now.

[*Enter NORAH L. carrying large tray with tin cups, big tin coffeepot, loaf of bread, etc. Another maid behind her with armful of tea-towels, a fringed red tablecloth, and a stoneware washstand pitcher.*]

MOLLIE. Oh Norah, did you find some more things?

NORAH. No, ma'am. There's a whole basket av thim gone nobody knows where.

MOLLIE. A whole basket of tin cups and plates! Why, they couldn't mislay a whole basket!

NORAH. [*Shakes head.*] However they done it, Mrs. Dillon, there's only wan basket now where there was two before.

MOLLIE. We'll just have to do without somehow. [*Looks over tray.*]

NORAH. Yes, ma'am. I've got the soap-dishes for to put the pickles and candies in.

[*MOLLIE and NORAH cross R. Pause at door. Business*

of MOLLIE giving orders. HOLT and DILLON intercept the other maid and inspect tea-towels, etc.]

DILL. [*Peering into pitcher.*] What on earth's this, Katie?

MAID. Av ye plaze, sir, that's the punch.

DILL. Oh! [*Shakes pitcher expertly; sniffs it; shakes head; hands it back to her.*]

HOLT. [*Flapping out red tablecloth.*] What are you going to do with this thing?

[*Exit NORAH R.*]

MOLLIE. [*Turning.*] What was that you said, Dan? Why, that's the tablecloth, and the towels are for napkins. You two go and get the ironing-board and trestles out of the laundry, will you? I want to fix a table in the other room.

DILL. Ironing-board and trestles? You're on! Come along, Dan.

[*Exeunt HOLT and DILLON L. MOLLIE business of giving instructions to second maid as exeunt R.*]

[*A pause. Voices, noise and laughter off R.*]

[*Enter L. furtively KATHLEEN with wrap over arm. Advances cautiously to U. C. Stands looking warily off R. Business of glancing alternately off R. and L. as she takes candle from bookshelves and lights it. Stands in front of casement doors and passes candle backwards and forwards three times. A pause. Voices and noise off R. all the time. Doors C. open gently and cautiously. Enter BRYAN in overcoat and hat.*]

KATH. [*Stifled exclamation.*] Oh Jim!

BRY. [*Glances left and right, laughs as he sees her with candle.*] Well, lady Macbeth! [*Takes candle from her, blows it out and replaces it on shelf.*] All ready?

KATH. Jim, I — I'm so frightened.

BRY. [*Arm around her.*] Pshaw, we aren't going to do anything except get married.

KATH. *Jim!* Don't you call that *anything*?

BRY. [*Emphatic.*] No, I don't! [*Hastily.*] Well, I mean anything *wrong*, you know.

KATH. I feel like a thief.

BRY. Why, Kathleen, *I'm* the thief. I'm stealing you, I suppose, but — [*Rather loud and defiant.*] I don't care!

KATH. [*Fearful.*] S-sh!

BRY. [*Sturdily.*] We wouldn't have to do this if it wasn't for your family. They can't rake up a thing against me, except my father's business. See here, little girl — [*Holds her off by both shoulders.*] Do you care for me?

KATH. [*Low.*] Ye-yes.

BRY. Enough for *this*?

KATH. [*Same business.*] Ye-yes, Jim.

BRY. [*Joyous, arms around her.*] Well, it's all right then — !

KATH. S-sh! [*Tries to put her hand over his mouth, looking fearfully around.*]

BRY. [*Twisting head aside.*] And *we're* all right — !

KATH. [*Same business.*] S-sh!

BRY. [*Same business.*] And everything's all right! Where's your coat? [*Snatches it up and huddles her into it. Sweeps her off through doors c. with arm around her.*]

KATH. [*Faintly as exeunt.*] Don't, Jim!

[*Enter L. immediately* DILLON, carrying trestles, HOLT with ironing-board. MOLLIE appears in door R.]

MOLLIE. Oh, are you there, boys? [*Advancing c. Shivers.*] Br-rr-rh! Where's that cold air coming

from? Well, of all things! The doors are open! [*Slams them shut and locks them.*] Somebody wanted to ventilate, I suppose.

DILL. Where d'you want these, Mollie?

MOLLIE. [*At c. up.*] Anywhere in there. [*Gesture to ball-room.*]

[HOLT crosses R. with ironing-board. Exit R.]

[DILLON follows with trestles. At door R. turning suddenly.] Oh, Mollie, I say, I think I'll bring the men in here to smoke directly. You let us know when Kathleen's going to dance, will you?

MOLLIE. All right. She went upstairs just now to get ready.

DILL. Ready? Why, she was all ready, already!

MOLLIE. Well, I suppose she wanted to fix her hair or something. Anyway, she said she'd be gone a few minutes. [*Going L.*]

DILL. Ready! [*Shakes head.*] Can you beat it! [*Exit R.*]

[MOLLIE exit L.]

[*Voices and laughter off R. Noise of chairs dragged about. Enter NORAH rapidly R. Comes down c. gathers up steins, etc., which DILL. collected on table, and exit hurrying R. Enter R. the other maid, crosses rapidly L. exit. Re-enters L. in a second, carrying large tray with more dishes, etc. Re-enter NORAH R. with empty tray, crosses L. exit. Noise, laughter, confusion of voices off R. Momentary hush. Man's voice singing the first verse of "Tipperary." Interruption of applause, laughter, etc. None of this business at all loud or rowdy only what might be heard at any ordinary dancing-party.*]

[*Enter R. DILLON, WRIGHT, HOLT and the rest of the*

men. *Business of spreading throughout the room, talking, lighting cigarettes, cigars, etc.*

[DILLON and WRIGHT down c.]

DILL. Between you and me, Dick, that punch was *punk* — regular woman's stuff. They ought to have asked *me* to make it.

WRI. [*Good-natured and civil.*] Oh, I guess the punch was all right, Jack.

DILL. I can fix you up with a high-ball right here, though. [*Goes R. to table and inspects tray with siphon, etc.*] The ice is all melted. [*Calling to HOLT.*] Oh Dan, ring for Norah or somebody, will you?

HOLT. [*Sitting on lounge, smoking, rises leisurely manner, business of pressing button beside door L. Remains standing by door.*]

CARSON. [*At table R.*] Are you going to let anybody else in on this, Jack? Because if you are, there's only one glass and — [*Picks it up and sniffs it.*] — it's been used.

DILL. Hey? [*Inspects tray again.*] Oh, all right.

[NORAH appears in doorway L.]

HOLT. [*Calling.*] What's wanted? Ice?

ALL. [*Burlesque clamor.*] TUMBLERS!

DILL. [*Calling.*] Tell her to bring another siphon too. [*Picks up bottle, eyeing it critically.*]

HOLT. [*At door L. back to audience, business of conferring with NORAH. Shuts door. Turning.*] Say, Jack — [*Comes down c.*]

DILL. Hey?

HOLT. Norah's gone to get the ice and stuff, but she says there aren't any tumblers.

DILL. [*Setting bottle down.*] No tumblers?

HOLT. Nope. Everything's locked up and you can't

get at anything. She said we'd have to wait till they could wash up some of the cups or something.

DILL. [*Grimace.*] Holy mackerel!

ALL. [*Chanting loud and mournfully.*] NOBODY KNOWS HOW DRY WE ARE!

DILL. Oh, shut up, you fellows, it's only a minute.

ALL. [*Same business.*] NOBODY KNOWS! NOBODY KNOWS!

DILL. [*Sudden.*] Here! Hush! I've got an idea!

LOWELL. Want me to hold your head? [*Does so.*]

DILL. [*Shaking him off.*] There're some things in the silver-basket that'll do first-rate — egg-cups and little bowls and things — won't they?

Low. Sure! Where's the silver-basket?

DILL. Why, you know. I showed you. Get 'em out, will you? [*Going u. c.*]

Low. [*Down c. staring after him.*] Hey?

DILL. [*Without heeding him. At c. strikes attitude.*] Courage! Cheer up! The worst is not yet! Life smiles still! I'm going to hurry up the ice. [*Going.*]

Low. [*After him, seizing his arm.*] Here! Where did you say the silver was?

DILL. I showed you, don't you remember? Under the table — [*Stops, seeing LOWELL's bewildered expression.*] Oh! [*Lowers voice.*] You're thinking about the — the other? Just don't let Dan see it, that's all! [*Winks, pokes him in the side. Exit L.*]

[LOWELL returns slowly down c. Profoundly puzzled look.]

CARSON. What's the secret, Tom?

Low. [*Shakes head.*] Ask me something easy! He said to get out the silver-basket. He said it was under the table! [*Stands c. looking around helplessly.*]

WRI. *Which table?*

LOW. *I don't know. Any table.*

HOLT. *Maybe he meant the lounge.*

[All the men get down on their hands and knees, business of looking under every article of furniture in the room.]

[Enter DILL. L. with tray of ice, siphon, etc., which he balances on his hand at shoulder-height like a waiter in a restaurant. Comes down c.]

DILL. *Here you are! [Halts c. looks around astounded.]* What on earth — ?

[All sit back on their heels like frogs looking up at him.]

HOLT. *[Emerging from under lounge. Loud sneeze.] Att-choo-oo! It's not there, anyhow.*

DILL. *What's not there?*

HOLT. *The — [Business of approaching sneeze.] — the — Att-choo-oo-hoo! The silver.*

ALL. *[Sitting on their heels. Solemn chant.] NOBODY KNOWS HOW DRY WE ARE! NOBODY KNOWS! NOBODY KNOWS!*

DILL. *[Raising his voice above the racket.]* For the love of Mike! *[To HOLT as noise subsides.]* What d'ye mean silver?

HOLT. *Didn't you say it was here? Under a table?*

DILL. *[Nods.]*

HOLT. *Well, it's not. It's not here and it's not under anything.*

ALL. *[Business of rising, brushing dust off their clothes, etc. Begin again in chorus.] NOBODY KNOWS HOW DRY WE ARE!*

DILL. *[Loud. Impatient.]* Oh, can that! *[Comes down R. places tray on table. Looks under table, straightens up, surprised.]* Hey?

[Sudden silence.]

DILL. Somebody's fixed this up, I suppose. Go ahead! Spring it on me, whatever it is!

[Pause.]

DILL. [*Loud, looking around.*] Well?

Low. Nobody's fixed anything up, Jack, unless it's you. There isn't any silver-basket in the room. We've all looked everywhere.

DILL. Oh, quit your kidding!

WRI. Honor bright, Jack!

DILL. [*Parade of coolness.*] Well, if you fellows don't care for a drink, it's all one to me. You can wait till Tom brings out the basket. *He* knows where it is, anyhow.

[*Sensation. Everybody looking at LOWELL.*]

Low. [*Shouting.*] *Me?* I know where your silver is?

DILL. Yes, you! [*Looking around at the others.*] I showed it to him not half an hour ago in this room.

Low. [*Shouting.*] *In this room?* I haven't been in this room this evening since the first dance.

DILL. [*Cool.*] All right! Have it your own way! [*Lights cigarette with elaborate air of indifference.*] When Tom gets ready, boys, you can have your drink.

Low. [*Astonished and beginning to be irritated.*] I don't know anything about your silver, I tell you. What would I be monkeying with your silver for?

DILL. Well, I don't mind saying that I don't think it's a very good joke myself, Tom.

Low. [*Angry.*] Well, I'll be —

WRI. [*Interrupting.*] Whoosh! Keep still! [*Business of WRIGHT and other men dragging LOWELL to one side L. and trying to argue with him.*]

HOLT. [*Down R. to DILL.*] I guess you've made some mistake, Jack.

DILL. Mistake nothing!

HOLT. Yes, but I believe Tom's in earnest, and all the rest of us are in earnest.

DILL. Well then, what's become of the silver? It was here and I told Tom about it.

HOLT. Why, *I* don't know, but it's perfectly plain somebody must have come along, and moved it somewhere else. Anyway, you don't want to make a fuss about a little thing like that.

DILL. Don't hey? Maybe you'll be pleased to hear that your flute was in with it.

HOLT. My flute?

DILL. Yep!

HOLT. [*Excited.*] But what the mischief — ?

DILL. It's gone too, of course. But you don't want to make a fuss about a little thing like that, you know.

HOLT. [*Anxious.*] I'll go and ask Mollie. [*Going R.*]

DILL. [*Calling after him.*] I can't remember whether I told Mollie or not. Kathleen knows about it.

[*Exit HOLT R.*]

Low. [*Earnest.*] I tell you, Jack, I don't know where your silver is. Whoever you told, it wasn't me.

DILL. [*Good-natured.*] Well then, one of us is nutty, that's all. [*Serious.*] Don't you remember? It was in here when I asked you to sing, and you said you didn't feel like it because of your cold being so bad?

Low. [*Loud.*] *Me?* I said that? Why, I haven't got any cold! *Sing?* Why, you heard me singing "Tipperary" just this minute!

DILL. [*Startled.*] That's so! But —

[*Confused noise of women's voices heard off R.*]

DILL. Who *did* I tell then?

[Enter R. MOLLIE, MRS. WRIGHT, MISS STERNBERG, others.]

MOLLIE. [*Running down c. Stops, looks around nervously.*] What's the matter? Dan just came flying to me with some tale about the silver, and now he's gone raging and tearing all over the house, looking for Kathleen and his flute. What's happened?

DILL. [*Exaggerated carelessness.*] Nothing — nothing at all. I was just wondering where you'd put the silver.

MOLLIE. The silver? I told Norah to take it upstairs.

DILL. Well — er — she didn't. I brought the basket in here myself.

MOLLIE. In *here*? What for?

DILL. Well — er — I thought it would be safer.

MOLLIE. [*Looking at him with increasing nervousness.*] Well? What of it? What's happened?

DILL. [*Same manner.*] Oh, nothing, nothing at all! I — um — I thought you might know where it was, that's all.

MOLLIE. Thought *I* might know where it was? But you just said — [*Stops. Looks at him. Screams.*] Jack, it's *gone*?

[*Commotion.*]

DILL. [*Loud. Worried.*] Here, don't jump at conclusions that way!

MOLLIE. But our silver's *gone*!

DILL. [*Same manner.*] Now don't make up your mind all at once that way? That's a real woman's trick —

MOLLIE. [*Stamping.*] Jack Dillon, where's our silver?

DILL. Why — er — why — if *you* don't know where

it is, Mollie, I don't! [*Feebly.*] It — it — it seems to have disappeared.

[*Sensation.*]

MOLLIE. [*Suddenly calm.*] I *knew* it would be stolen. I had a *feeling* it would be.

WRI. Oh, it must be somewhere in the house, Mrs. Dillon. It'll turn up presently.

MOLLIE. [*Decidedly.*] It's been stolen! Somebody has gotten in and taken it. I remember now the terrace-doors were open when I came in this evening before supper. [*With emphasis.*] *Wide open!*

[*Sensation.*]

CARSON. *Wide open?* Fat burglar?

DILL. [*Uneasy.*] That doesn't necessarily prove that it's been stolen, though.

LOW. Well, I guess it's clear anyhow, Jack, that I didn't have anything to do with it. I might play a trick on you, but you know I wouldn't on Mrs. Dillon.

DILL. [*Hearty.*] Of course you wouldn't, Tom, that's all right! But — [*Lowering voice.*] — what I want to know is, who in thunder was it that I took for you? You don't suppose it could possibly have been — eh? [*Loud.*] Where're you going, Mollie?

MOLLIE. [*Resolutely, marching u. c.*] I'm going to get that idiotic detective.

[*Sensation.*]

MRS. WRI. [*High voice.*] Detective? What detective?

[*All look at DILLON.*]

DILL. Yes, we've got one in the house, he's been here all evening.

WRI. He must be a peach of a detective!

[*Enter L. violently HOLT. Breathless, excited.*]

HOLT. [*Loud voice.*] Say!

[*Everybody turning to look.*]

DILL. What's up now?

HOLT. [*Running into MOLLIE U. C.*] Say!

MOLLIE. Mercy, Dan, what is it? Have you found the silver? Where's Kathleen?

HOLT. [*At c. Same business, pausing for breath between every word.*] Kathleen? Don't know. Couldn't find her. But say — ! [*Pauses to take breath.*]

DILL. [*Impatient.*] Well, say it, Dan, for Heaven's sake!

HOLT. [*Same business.*] You know silver — ?

[*Sensation.*]

ALL. [*As he stops for breath.*] Yes? WHAT?

HOLT. [*Same business.*] You know detective — ?

ALL. [*Same business.*] YES! GO ON!

HOLT. [*Same business.*] Thief! Got him! Bringing him here! Dressed like a plumber.

[*Sensation.*]

LOW. [*Startled.*] A plumber! [*Looks down over his own costume.*]

DILL. [*Startled.*] A plumber! [*Looks LOWELL over.*]

[*Loud voices heard off L. Enter MIKE MURPHY, holding hands high over head. AMES in rear, revolver in hand. All women scream and crowd R. Men scatter up and down L. MURPHY and AMES come down c.*]

AMES. [*Pompous.*] Here's your man, Mr. Dillon.

[*Sensation.*]

AMES. [*To MIKE.*] You can drop your hands now.

MIKE. [*Furious.*] Dthrop me hands, is it? All right! Stand from under! [*Starts for AMES.*]

[*Women scream. Men start forward. DILLON and WRIGHT grab MIKE.*]

AMES. [*Cool, stepping back.*] Never mind, gents, I got him covered. [*To MIKE.*] Now don't get excited.

MIKE. [*Struggling.*] Lave me alone! He held me up! The scoundthrell come up behint me and held me up, I'm tellin' yez!

DILL. Here now, resisting the officer won't do you any good, you know.

MIKE. An off'cer? Who's an off'cer?

AMES. [*Displaying badge with impressive gesture.*] I am. George W. Ames.

MIKE. Bedad, this time George W. misses! What d'yez take me for? [*Lunges at him. Restrained by others. Women scream.*]

AMES. Don't strain yourselves, gents. I can attend to him easy. Spotted him at once. He goes by the name of Kid Sampson —

[*Sensation. MIKE stands stupefied.*]

AMES. He's the fellow that did the job at Mandell's—

MIKE. [*Violent lunge. Loud inarticulate roar. Others same business as before.*]

AMES. [*Calm.*] Passed himself off for a plumber this time —

MIKE. [*Frantic.*] A plumber! Mither o' Moses! I am a plumber!

AMES. [*Ironic.*] Yep. You're a plumber all right. Maid Norah says she knows him. Probably in cahoots. [*To MOLLIE pleasantly.*] Missed anything yet this evening, ma'am?

MOLLIE. [*Comes down R. Hesitatingly.*] No, that is yes — I — [*To Ames with sudden sharpness.*] I wish you'd put that revolver away!

AMES. [*Taken aback.*] Ma'am?

MOLLIE. [*Increasing sharpness.*] Put it away, if

you please! It makes me nervous. Don't you know that you might hurt somebody with it? [*High and peremptory.*] Put it away!

AMES. [*Confounded. Humbly.*] Yes, ma'am. [*Slowly returns revolver to hip-pocket.*]

MOLLIE. That's better. It might have gone off any minute.

MIKE. Glory be, there's wan av yez has some sinse! [*To MOLLIE.*] Yez know me, don't yez, ma'am?

[*DILLON and WRIGHT release him.*]

MOLLIE. [*Hesitatingly.*] Why, I — I — somehow all the workmen look so much alike. You — you look like the plumber, but —

MIKE. [*Shouting.*] Hivens and earth, I am the plumber! Me na-ame's Mike Murphy! I'm an honest man!

AMES. Ain't that enough? Says he's an honest plumber! [*With profound scorn.*] An honest plumber!

MIKE. [*Hands to Heaven wildly.*] Lave me wipe a j'int! I'll show yez whether I'm a plumber or not! Lave me wipe a j'int!

DILL. Wipe a joint? Well, whose joint?

[*MIKE stares at him dumb.*]

AMES. See? He can't answer.

MIKE. [*Solemn.*] I knew they was all bug-house, but I didn't know they was as bug-house as this! [*Looks all around. Sees MISS STERNBERG.*] There's a young la-ady that ought to know me.

[*Knocking at terrace-door.*]

Miss S. [*Frigid, drawing herself up.*] I know you?

[*Knocking.*]

MIKE. Arre yez going to deny it? Didn't yez talk to me here in this very room an' all? Didn't yez give

me a dthrink of whiskey? Didn't I come within an a-ace of kissin' yez?

[*Sensation.*]

MISS S. No! The very idea!

MIKE. [*Aghast.*] No?

MISS S. [*Screaming.*] No, no, No! As if I'd behave that way with any man! And besides it wasn't you, it was Mr. Lowell!

[*Sensation. Knocking louder.*]

WRIGHT. Now what's going to happen?

[HOLT at U. C. opens doors. Enter BRYAN and KATHLEEN. *Sensation.*]

[MOLLIE, HOLT, DILLON, others.] Kathleen Travers!

BRYAN. [*Excited and jubilant.*] Kathleen Bryan, please!

MOLLIE. [*Screaming.*] Kathleen, you haven't done it?

[*Great excitement. All the women crowd around KATHLEEN, men around BRYAN, business of exclamations, screams, laughter, etc. MIKE and AMES down R., business of watching each other with various false starts and threatening movements.*]

[DILLON and BRYAN emerge down C. from the crowd.]

DILL. Well, I don't suppose I have any business to feel so good over it, Jim, but I — [*Business of handshaking.*]

MIKE. [*Attracted. Sudden start. Anxiety.*] The saints be praised! Misther Jim, Misther Jim!

BRYAN. Hey?

MIKE. Look at me! Look at me good! Tell me who I am!

BRY. [*Looks. Astonished.*] Mike Murphy — Mike! What are you doing here?

[*Sensation.*]

MIKE. [*Wild. Capering.*] Whurroo! More power to yer elbow, Misther Jim, sir! Whurroo!

AMES. [*To BRYAN, gesticulating with thumb towards MIKE.*] Say, mister, you think you know him? [*Cigar in mouth as at first.*]

BRYAN. *Mike?* Think I know him? Well, I guess yes! He's worked in our place for five years!

MIKE. Whurroo! I knew it! I knew I was meself all the time! *Rrump-toodle-tee — rrrump-tee-toodle-tee!* [*Begins a jig, shouting the air of "St. Patrick's Day in the Morning."*]

AMES. Huh! [*Takes cigar from corner of mouth, looks it over, replaces it in the other corner.*] All right! [*Goes U. C.*]

MIKE. [*Suddenly stopping.*] All right, is it? [*Starts for him.*]

DILL. [*Detaining him.*] Wait a minute! Are you the man I showed the silver to?

[*Exit AMES C.*]

MIKE. I am not, sir! [*Trying to break away, drags DILLON U. L.*]

DILL. Well, look here, I'm sorry this happened. [*Gives money.*]

MIKE. [*Lofty, pocketing money.*] So am I, sir, so am I! I'll make so bold to remind yez, this is a prrivate fight — [*Motions to get away.*]

DILL. Hold on a minute, please. I'm awfully sorry — [*Gives money.*]

MIKE. [*Pleasantly.*] Don't mintion it, sir — [*Pockets money.*]

DILL. [*Fervently.*] I certainly won't if you won't — [*Business of cleaning out his pockets. Gives.*]

MIKE. [*Very jolly.*] I'm with yez, sir, I undtherstand. [*Exit L.*]

DILL. [*Coming down c. hands in pockets, philosophical.*] Well, I guess there's no doubt about it, the man I showed that silver to, took it! All we had was in that basket! [*Suddenly bursts into roar of laughter.*] Ho, ho, ho! Ha, ha, ha!

[*Sensation. Everybody turning to look.*]

LOWELL. Here! [*Takes his arm.*] What's the joke?

DILL. [*Gasping between bursts of laughter.*] Why, I was just thinking — Ha, ha, ha! — some fellow's run off with all our silver — ho, ho, ha! [*Leans on LOWELL'S shoulder for support.*] Ha, ha, ha!

Low. Well, I'll be hanged! Most men wouldn't be so happy over having their house burglarized.

DILL. [*Same business.*] Yes, but Tom, you know — ha, ha! — Dan Holt's learning to play the flute — ha, ha, ha!

Low. Yes. Well?

DILL. [*Letting go of him and staggering around in a paroxysm of laughter.*] Well, they took the flute!

[*Laughter. Confusion. Enter NORAH L. with basket.*]

DILL. [*Recovering.*] [*Down L.*] Well, I suppose we may as well go on dancing, hadn't we? One of you fellows start the Victrola again, will you?

[*Exit HOLT R. Business of everybody pairing off.*]

MOLLIE. [*At c.*] I'm so sorry, Kathleen and Jim, if you'd come back a little sooner there'd have been something to eat for your wedding-supper. But now there's nothing left, and nothing to eat it with anyhow — [*Turning as NORAH touches her elbow.*] Well, Norah?

[*Music begins off.*]

NORAH. [*Presents basket.*] Plaze ma'am, somebody said yez was wantin' the silver.

[*Sensation, crowding, laughter, excitement.*]

MOLLIE. [*Screaming.*] Norah! [*Seizes basket and begins to take out forks, spoons, etc.*] Where was it? What had been done with it?

NORAH. Plaze ma'am, I tuk it upstairs like yez told me to, and there's nobody been near it since.

MOLLIE. [*To DILL.*] Well, then, *what* — ?

DILL. [*Blank.*] That's what *I* want to know! *What?*

MOLLIE. [*Sudden idea.*] You don't suppose you could have got hold of that other basket of kitchen-ware and tin things, do you?

DILL. [*Hands to Heaven.*] Great Scott!

[*Uproar, laughter, cheers.*]

HOLT. [*Appearing in door R.*] Hey there, get busy! This is "Get out and get under."

CURTAIN

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